

### 13<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – ‘God is generous’ (Mark 12:41-44, 2 Cor 9:6-15)

Do any of you like people watching. That is being in a relatively crowded place, adopting that mid distance stare and noticing people’s dress code or mannerisms. I love it! And I try to guess who they might be like, what interests they have, what they do for a living. Now and again someone really attracts my attention. I can’t always pin point what it is but I am drawn to that person and (doing my best to hide it) my curious eyes follow them down the street until they disappear into the next shop.

Mark’s story of the giving of the 2 copper coins tells us that Jesus enjoyed people watching too. According to the passage, he sat down, presumably to take time to watch the crowds. He notices the individuals. He sees the way that they dress, the way they behave, the way they move. He notices the way that some rich people both disinterested and thoughtless throw a large amount of money into the plate. I can imagine that there might have been a large clatter punctuating the buzz of conversation and movement of a large crowd. An impressive show of wealth and disposable income. ...

The Jesus notices a widow coming to give her offering. He would have known she was a widow perhaps by the way she dressed or acted. He would know that Widows during this time were vulnerable. They were often the forgotten members of the community. A widow had no means of providing for herself. She was dependent on her sons, if she had any, and then the general community. She might have been at the mercy of a relative who took over her control as she had no husband.

The story of the Widow with the Two Coins is an account that is preceded by a rebuke from Jesus aimed at the scribes who, among other sins, preyed on widows for their property and possessions. He criticises them for proudly wearing long robes and for taking the seats of honour in the synagogue. Instead of taking care of widows, these spiritual leaders were taking away what little they had. The plight of any widow is etched in Jesus’ heart as the Old Testament see God command that Widows are properly cared for as they are labelled as vulnerable.

Jesus watches the widow. She takes 2 very small copper coins, the noise that when put into the offering pot is drowned out by the crowd. Jesus notices her, because her offering is not thrown like the action of the rich and uncaring. The passage tells us that it was put. There is something intentional about putting or placing something. It is a considered action. Something that is premeditated. And this is what Jesus notices and knows, that this woman has given her everything. He is the one now who is impressed because she gave more than anyone else.

A person can give a numerically significant amount of money. But numbers do not matter to God. He owns it all anyway. In God’s economy, [amount sacrificed](#) always supersedes amount given. In the story, Jesus was not nearly as concerned about what was being placed in the temple treasury as what was still left at home. This is why Jesus pointed out that the widow gave all she had. Her sacrifice could not be matched by the rich. Her sacrifice is what mattered.

But why? I don’t think Jesus or anyone else would have blamed her if she had only put one coin in or none at all. One source suggests that one of the coins at the time of Jesus would have been worth the pay of six minutes work. Such a tiny amount, perhaps paying for only a small amount of food. She now has nothing.

Here is the action of a woman who is responding to God’s generosity. She gives up any control she might have over her money. If she was a victim of the abuse of selfish scribes, she has seen past the action of the self-serving religious establishment to God who she loves. If we think in God’s economy of 2 fish, 5 loaves feeding well over 5000 people with left over because of a small boy’s generosity then we can only imagine what God did with those 2 small coins.

We Serve A Generous God

God has been teaching me about His generosity for as long as I can remember. I am learning that God isn't just generous he is radically generous.

The Bible says He loves us each so much that He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, provides us with everything to enjoy, bestows on us favour and honour, gives us the fullness of joy, lavishes his grace upon us, and it is true that every good and perfect gift comes from Him. It is God's love that propelled Him to send us His only son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

The Bible says God doesn't just love; He lavishes us with love. He doesn't dole out wisdom; He "gives generously to all without finding fault" The Prodigal Son got the fattest calf, the guests at the wedding in Cana got the best wine, and Peter caught so many fish that his boat began to sink. God loves to give!

Romans chapter 8 32 says that God who did not spare [even] His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? He has for generations, He does and He will.

*Generosity* in a church context describes unselfish willingness to give in order to make a positive difference for the purposes of Christ. This is the giving of our, time, talents, materials and our money. Congregations that practice *Extravagant Generosity* provide ministries that address our spiritual need to give in ways that exceed all expectations and extend to unexpected measures. Fruitful congregations thrive because of extraordinary sharing, willing sacrifice, and joyous giving out of love to each other and mostly in response to God's goodness.

Pause now and listen to a song as we reflect on God's goodness. We will follow this with an opportunity for anyone to share examples of God's goodness and generosity in their life.

Buhfai tham ('handful of rice') was started in the state of Mizoram in north-east India in 1910. It is a practice where each family, mainly from the Mizo ethnic group, puts aside a handful of rice every time they cook a meal for Jesus the unseen guest. Later, they gather it and offer it to the church. The church in turn sells the rice and generates income to support its work.

Over time, the amount of rice given has increased and people have also started to give other things including firewood, vegetables and other produce. As a result, the churches in Mizoram are now self-sufficient.

One of the church leaders says, 'We do not receive any outside funding. All the money that we have is raised by ourselves. Mizoram State is not wealthy, but still, we can raise funds for the ministry of the Lord. We can now support 1,800 church leaders.'

'We Mizo people say, "As long as we have something to eat every day, we have something to give to God every day.'"

We each have metaphorically different sized hands to fill with rice. It doesn't matter how much rice we give, it's how we give it. God sees it. Jesus says Give, and you will receive. You will be given much. It will be poured into your hands—more than you can hold. You will be given so much that it will spill into your lap. The way you give to others is the way God will give to you."