In the passage that we just read, continuing right we left off last week, Jesus and his disciples were doing a little people watching in the temple. In particular, they were observing those who came before the temple treasury. He observed that many of the scribes would like to go around greeting the public while wearing their long robes, as a symbol of their power status and piety. They would also be offered the best seats in the synagogues. They would even evict the widows after their husbands have passed and they would draw attention to the crowd by saying long prayers in public.

 Furthermore, Jesus also noticed that those who were wealthy were putting in a large sum of money into the synagogue’s offering box. Jesus turned it into a teaching moment with his disciples. He quickly pointed out the hypocrisy of those who consider themselves pious and righteous, when it comes to their everyday living.

 Then they saw this poor widow walking in, probably hoping that no one would notice her being there. We don’t know much about this poor widow. We don’t know how old she was or who her husband was. As Jesus pointed out earlier, the scribes had a tendency to take away the widow’s property after her husband had died, so the widow was left penniless after being cheated upon. Nevertheless, this widow would still come faithfully to say her prayers and present her offering. On her way out, this widow quietly slipped in a couple of copper coins into the treasury box without saying a word, while avoided drawing any attention from others. Jesus explained to the disciples that those two coins that the widow put in were far more worthy than the large sum that the rich people had put in. This widow was offering her best, not only monetarily, but of her faith and her commitment as well. This was her LOVE offering to God, as we talked about last week, with ALL of her heart, All of her mind, ALL of her soul, and ALL of her strength.

 Interestingly if we had kept on reading beyond this passage, we would see that Jesus also pointed out that this widow gave what she has to an institution (the temple) that would eventually be destroyed, as Jesus prophesied that “*Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down”.[[1]](#footnote-1)* Nevertheless, this widow still honored her part by giving what she could, as sign of her devotion and discipline of giving for the mission of God. What she owned ultimately belonged to God and not to her.

 Some may wonder why? why give? Why bother giving to an institution that would eventually be destroyed or whose leaders may be corrupted or has lost its missional focus and vision? However, this widow believed in her action and her discipline. Her faith and her devotion matter. And she did it without much fan-fare or attention, unlike those who flamboyantly showing off their act of charity and self-righteousness.

 Her act of giving and devotion to the mission and the kingdom of God is larger than the institution itself, but **only God knows for sure how long the institution would stand.**  However, God did promise to us that one day he will make all things NEW beyond our human imagination or worth.

 I remember when I was in Sunday School, I would always volunteer to go around the class collecting the offering with the offering bag and to help the teacher count them at the end. Little did I know what it was meant for back then.

Each Sunday, my parents would give me a couple of coins (equivalent maybe about $.25) so that I would have something to put into the offering bag. I was probably around 9-10 years old at the time, just about to understand the concept of money and its power AND responsibilities that comes with it. I remember saying to myself, *“what difference does it make with my $.25”.* The church probably doesn’t need my quarter anyway. It’s just a drop in the bucket, not even enough to pay for its bill or its staff. Why even bother giving?

But as I grew up, I came to realize was that my parents and my Sunday School teacher were teaching me, a life lesson of charity and thanksgiving, not so much of how much we give but why we give. **By giving of ourselves and making our contribution, we honor our calling and responsibility of being God’s stewards in ministry.** That I think is the most important lesson there.

**As Christians, we develop this discipline of giving, not out of our abundance or obligation but out of our faith, commitment, and good will.** When we give and share what we have, we put the two Greatest Commandments, as we talked about last week into practice. We demonstrate our love of God with **ALL** of our hearts, **ALL** of our souls and **ALL** of our strength and our love to our neighbors as **God challenges us to return our thanks to God for what we have by sharing it with others.**

Throughout the Bible, this concept of returning what belongs to God is not a novelty. Even back in *Genesis*, Adam and Eve’s sons - Cain and Abel were asked to present their offering before God.[[2]](#footnote-2) The LORD looked favorably upon Abel’s offering because he brought the firstborn and the fat portion (the best of the best) before the LORD for the offering, not just any leftovers or out of one’s abundance. It’s not so much about the contents or the amount of his offering but the attitude behind of what he had to offer. Cain, on the other hand, only brought “whatever” as the burnt offering, for that displeased God and Cain became jealous of his brother and eventually murdered him.

**Cheerful giving is expressive and liberating. It is NEVER reluctant and compelling.** As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, petitioning for a fund that would help out the widows and orphans in Jerusalem, **“*Each person should give what one has decided in one’s heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.[[3]](#footnote-3)***

When we give, the attention shall be directed towards the recipients - the beneficiaries, and NEVER the benefactors. As Jesus said, ***“it is more blessed to give than to receive.”*[[4]](#footnote-4)**

By letting go of what we have, we opened up ourselves to new possibilities while placing our ultimate trust in God’s hands. It’s not about what we need here on earth but what God is able to do for God’s kingdom. God will supply us with even more, if we simply Let Go and Let God by placing our trust in him. The fear of not having enough makes us feel **anxious**, **vulnerable** or **insecure** about our future. As one theologian put it best, ***“It is our fear that makes us hold on to life or to what represents life’s meaning for us.”***

 We live in an abundant world as God provides for us each day, just as God provide for the Israelites who were out wandering in the desert for 40 years. Each morning, they would receive their daily portion of manna and quails from God, with nothing more and nothing less…but just enough!

 Furthermore, often times, we have constantly been held hostage by our own fears of not having enough…not having enough money, not enough people to volunteer, not enough space to do what we need to do…etc. etc. We have this misconception that the more we have, the better we are! But in God’s economy, we need to consider what we do have, whether we have a lot or a little. We ought to give thanks to our God for graciously provided for us already. The problem is not that there is not enough to go around, the problem is they are not being distributed equitably and shared fairly among all people. The 1% will continue to live lavishly in abundance while the other 99% continue to suffer in scanty scarcity. Those who have plenty are lavishly living in abundance, while those who have little are competing and scraping off the crumbs that are being thrown to them.

 When we let go of our fears and things that we hold on to so dearly in life, we can then fully depend upon the One whom we can trust and anchor our faith on. When God asked Abraham to take his family to go on a journey into a new land, Abraham went without hesitation or doubt whatsoever. Abraham had everything to lose…he was one of the wealthiest men on earth at the time. Yet God asked him to surrender what he had and went in faith to where God would show him to go. God’s demand of Abraham’s faith was huge. God asked for Abraham’s first-born son – Isaac by making him his ultimate sacrifice.

As we enter into the upcoming season of Thanksgiving, let us be reminded that God has already given the ultimate gift for all of us through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. God has offered the best for us, as the ultimate sacrifice…and God is only asking us to share what we have with others.

Even though the two cooper coins may seem like “a drop in the bucket”, they represent the genuine faith of those who are marginalized and disenfranchised, those who are oppressed and without any power or voice. This simple act of giving challenges us to live out our lives through our actions with proper purpose and motivation, instead of “going through the motion”.

Through the widow’s offering, we are reminded us that we must let go of the things that we are holding onto and idolize in life. When we let go of our own fear and our own insecurity, we can then, and only then, fully experience God’s generosity and the magnitude of grace lavished upon us.

**It is God’s mission that we ultimately support; it is God’s fruits that we bear, not ours.** Let us give thanks to our God with all of our hearts cheerfully and willingly. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Mark 13:2 Perry, Pete Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 4, p.289* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Genesis 4:3-4* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *II Corinthians 9:7* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Acts 20:35* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)