

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Fourth Sunday After Trinity, July 2, 2023

✝ ✝ ✝

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 438, 37:3, 442, 439, 52.

Lessons: Malachi 3:6-12, Hebrews 13:1-9, Luke 21:1-4.

Sermon Text: Mark 12:41-44.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear fellow-redeemed in Christ:

There is a biblical lesson in arithmetic that we all have to learn and review from time to time. Man's reasoning tells him that the more he gives the less he will have left for himself. The Bible teaches that if we give more to the Lord, we will have more left for ourselves. Paul writes: ***"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."*** (2 Corinthians 9:6, NIV84)

Christian giving, we must also remember, is a fruit of faith in Jesus. There can be such Christian giving only if a person believes in Jesus as his Savior. Unbelievers have an altogether different idea about giving. It is said of a heathen people that they would at their heathen feasts cut off the tails of the pigs they were about to eat and throw them into the bush as an offering to their gods while they themselves enjoyed eating the delicious meat. They could easily spare the tails, and this simple offering was supposed to satisfy the gods. At least, it seemed to satisfy their consciences.

Surely such kind of giving should not be what Christians do. Such giving is not pleasing to the Lord. If we first supply all our needs and satisfy our every whim and desire for material things, and then, if we have anything left, give that to the Lord, that shows a definite weakness of faith. That kind of giving our old Adam would have us do. We should think of the Lord and his work first and supply the needs of his kingdom work. We should remember how much the Lord has given to us, both of spiritual and material blessings, and then give accordingly. Then the Lord will also bless us abundantly in every way.

Our text tells us about an outstanding way of giving to the Lord, a giving that is a sacrifice. Let us learn about:

GIFTS THAT ARE SACRIFICES IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

- 1. The poor widow's gift was a sacrifice to the Lord;**
- 2. The Savior's gift was a sacrifice for us; and,**
- 3. Our gift for the Lord's kingdom should also be a sacrifice.**

"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury." Jesus had been speaking to the Jewish scribes, teachers of the Law, while he was teaching in the temple. He had condemned them, saying of them: ***"They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."*** (Mark 12:40, NIV84) Right after these bitter words Jesus went into the part of the temple called the court of the women. Here there were offering boxes for the money the people contributed. This was called the temple treasury.

As Jesus was sitting there, he watched as the people put in their gifts. This was not by chance that the Lord happened to see what people gave. He sat there with the express purpose of seeing what the people gave.

So now also, the Lord is aware of what we give. He looks down upon every congregation and notes how people are giving for his work. The omniscient Lord knows all things. The Bible says: ***"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good."*** (Proverbs 15:3, NIV84) The Lord's message to the

seven churches in Asia, as recorded in the book of Revelation, was: ***“I know your deeds ...”*** (Revelation 2:2, NIV84) Our deeds, also our giving, show whether or not we have faith in Jesus, and the measure of that faith.

We learn from our text how the various people gave at that time. We are told: ***“Many rich people threw in large amounts.”*** These people had been richly blessed with plenty and therefore could give a sizable offering. Thinking in terms of dollars and cents, the dollar amount of what the rich people gave was much. If they tithed, giving 1/10th of their income, that would be a large offering.

However, we do not want to take our example for giving from the rich mentioned in our text. Their giving was certainly not a sacrifice on their part. We want to learn from the poor widow. Our text tells us about her gift: ***“A poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.”*** Jesus watched a poor widow draw near and make her contribution. Her appearance and dress no doubt indicated that she was poor. But Jesus did not have to go by outward appearances to judge her giving. The all-knowing Son of God knew that this woman was a poverty-stricken widow. Most people would have overlooked this woman’s very tiny offering, but the Lord carefully regarded it. She gave a very small amount, worth less than a fraction of a penny, but it was all she had.

There are those who would judge the woman according to their worldly wisdom and say: This poor widow should have kept what she gave for her own support, at least part of it. But worldly wisdom makes big fools of men. The greedy thief, Judas Iscariot, also objected to the amount of the gift to the Lord when Mary lovingly anointed Jesus with a precious ointment. That’s the way the world judges a gift to the Lord.

Jesus, however, judges differently. We are told in our text: ***“Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’”*** Jesus makes a judgment that the poor widow contributed more than all the others. How is that? Those who contributed much gave what they didn’t need for themselves. They gave what was left over after all their necessities and pleasures had been taken care of. What they gave was not a sacrifice in any sense of the word. But the poor widow gave what she needed to live on. Her giving was truly a sacrifice to the Lord. Poverty can indeed be a blessing when it causes men to trust in the Lord for all their needs. That is what the poor widow did when she gave her last coins to the Lord. Do you perhaps think that this poor widow starved to death after she gave her gift? Certainly not. No doubt, the Lord provided her with all she needed and more. The psalmist says of the Lord: ***“He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.”*** (Psalm 113:7–8, NIV84)

The poor widow is a fine example for all Christians in her sacrificial giving. But the Savior’s gift of sacrifice for us is infinitely more precious.

2.

God is the greatest giver. Daily he provides us with all we need, and often more than that. Let us not forget that what we have is from the Lord. Even though we work hard, it is the Lord who has to give the blessing so that we have what we need. He gives us health and strength according to his will. He gives the sunshine and rain and the wind necessary for the crops. The Bible says of all creatures: ***“These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.”*** (Psalm 104:27–28, NIV84)

By far the greatest gift of God, however, is the gift of his dear Son. There simply is no comparison between our earthly blessings and the spiritual blessings in Christ. The Bible says: ***“The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** (Romans 6:23, NIV84) And consider the gift of Jesus himself in coming into this world to be our Savior from sin. Paul tells about what Jesus did: ***“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”*** (2 Corinthians 8:9, NIV84) Our Savior lived a lowly life of sacrifice. He worked hard, sometimes day and night, to teach, to heal the sick, always considerate for everyone’s needs. Consider what he received for this! He was ridiculed and hated by the majority of people. He had to depend on friends to supply his daily needs, since he had no home of his own. But above all else, we should think of Jesus’ great sacrifice on the cross. He suffered as no man has ever suffered and endured the worst agony in being crucified. He suffered all this for our sake, for the sake of every sinner. He literally gave himself for us. ***“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** (Romans

5:8, NIV84) And consider the precious result: ***“When we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.”*** (Romans 5:10, NIV84) Not only did Jesus live for us, keeping all the Law of God perfectly in our place; not only not only did he die for us, shedding his holy blood to cleanse us from all sins, but he also rose from the dead that we might be declared righteous in God’s sight.

All this Jesus did for us people who are sinners, people who are deserving of hell’s damnation to all eternity. That was truly a precious sacrifice Jesus made for us. Can there be a greater or more blessed gift than the sacrifice Jesus made for us to redeem us from hell?

This is what should be our motive in giving to the Lord. Because of what Jesus did for us, our gift for the Lord’s kingdom should also be a sacrifice.

3.

Normally members of a congregation give some kind of offering to the Lord. But sacrificial offerings are a different matter. First of all, we have to give ourselves to the Lord. This is done, not by our efforts at being good, but when we by the grace of God confidently trust in Jesus as our Savior. When we belong to the Lord by faith, then, we can also give other gifts, such as our money, time, and talents.

But, do we give these things to the extent that they could be called sacrificial offerings, as the poor widow gave in the temple? If we really did give sacrificial offerings to the Lord, the treasury of the church would be overflowing. There would never be anything we couldn’t do for lack of funds. No doubt, we have to say that we all fall far short of such giving.

Nevertheless, the example of the poor widow’s sacrifice is held before us in Scripture for our example. Our weak faith that keeps us from giving in such a manner can be strengthened by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. As we learn more from our hearing of the Gospel and our faith is strengthened, we also will be moved to give more to the Lord. Then too, our giving will be cheerfully done. Such giving pleases the Lord, for his Word tells us: ***“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*** Furthermore, when we give generously as the Lord has blessed us, then the Lord’s Word says: ***“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”*** (2 Corinthians 9:7–8, NIV84)

May the poor widow’s and Christ’s example of sacrificial giving move us to confess:

“We lose what on ourselves we spend;
We have as treasure without end,
Whatever, Lord, to Thee we lend,
Who givest all.” Amen.

(The Lutheran Hymnal 443:7)

(Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for August 30, 1987)