

**Text: Mark 12:41-44 (Pew Bible, pg.1005)**

**Title: “Engage ... With All Your Resources”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Open your Bibles please to Mark 12:41. I’m in the middle of a series of messages I’ve entitled “Engage ... An Urgent Call to On-Mission Living.” Jesus calls us to engage our world with His love. It’s impossible to do that without it costing you something. It will cost you time and it will cost you money. What you do with your time and money is a big gauge of where your heart is. Jesus said that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. One day Jesus showed up at the temple treasury where people brought their offerings to the Lord. We read about it in Mark 12:41-44.

Who would have thought that an act of service and worship that no one much paid attention to would be immortalized by Jesus. This little insignificant event of service and worship explodes with meaning, like the splitting of a single atom releases a force is felt for hundreds of miles. Wouldn’t you like to be part of something that catches the attention of heaven? That’s the awesome power and impact of a small but sacrificial deed.

### **1. JESUS’ INTEREST IN OUR TREASURES (Mark 12:41-42)**

These chapters in Mark’s Gospel tell us about several disputes that Jesus had in Temple in Jerusalem with religious leaders during the week leading up to His crucifixion. Now there were basically four different sections of the Temple. And happens in that part of the Temple where the treasury was located ... the place where people brought their offerings. And Jesus sat down and intently observed what was happening.

**Mark 12:41 - Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.**

So Jesus “watched” as people gave their offerings. Do realize that Jesus was watching when the offering plate was passed this morning. He’s interested in what we do with our treasures.

Historians tell us that there were thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles or chests where people would give their offerings. They looked like a horn turned upside down. People would put their coins in the small end and the coins would fall into the chest below. So when someone gave a bunch of coins (they didn’t have dollar bills in those days) it could make quite a racket. Some might put valuable silver or gold coins into the offering chest. A poorer person, like the widow Jesus observes, might bring an offering that consists of coins that were very, very thin pieces of copper ... the least valuable coin in the day of Jesus. It would be the equivalent of putting two pennies into the offering plate.

So where did this money go after it was placed in offering boxes? Maybe you wonder the same thing about where the money goes that people put in the offering plate, or give at other times. The money and items given were used in the ongoing ministry of the people of God, centered around the temple. The money and other items given were placed in a storehouse. And the priests would distribute the

money or items for the various ministries of the temple, like caring for the poor. Some of the offerings were used to repair the temple, or purchase the supplies needed in the temple worship. Some was used to pay the priests.

This is sometimes called “storehouse giving.” The practice was carried over into the New Testament where in the book of Acts we see the church bringing their offerings to the Apostles, the God-ordained church leaders, to distribute the funds in an appropriate way.

And so it is to this day. Every church has a “treasury” from which they pay for the various aspects of the ministry of the church. If we are to engage our city and our world with the love of Jesus Christ, those actions require resources ... the time and money of believers.

Now the text says in Mark 12 that many rich people threw in large amounts ... lots of coins. “Threw” is exactly what they did with their offerings. It meant to throw, sometimes with force.

**Mark 12:42 - But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.**

When this woman is described as “poor,” the word doesn’t just mean low on cash. She was destitute, as many widows were in biblical times. That’s why the Bible makes such a big deal about the care of widows. They were often the poorest people around.

And so Jesus is interested in what people give, whether much or little. Notice that:

- Jesus knew how much everyone gave ... the ones who gave large gifts and the widow who gave a very small sum.
- Jesus knew how much everyone was *able* to give. There were some who had the capacity to give, perhaps more than they were giving. And there were those whom Jesus knew could afford to give very little. Jesus knew the circumstances, and that this woman’s gift was truly a sacrifice for her. He knew her plight as a poor widow.

Jesus knew what these worshippers gave, and He knew how much was left over after they gave. He knows everything. In our church we have a measure of confidentiality in what people give. I typically don’t know who gives and how much they give. But Jesus knows. He sees more than our Record of Contribution like we mail to you each quarter.

So Jesus is interested in our treasures, however large or small they may be.

## **2. JESUS’ INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT OUR TREASURES (Mark 12:43-44)**

**Mark 12:43 - 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.**

Jesus called His disciples over to teach them something about giving. “Hey guys, come here. You’ve got to see this.” And He wants to call us aside to teach us about using our resources for the

Kingdom of God. These matters have to be taught to us and learned by us. And some of you aren't living in the fullness of God's blessing because you haven't been taught by the Lord to give. This is one of the most liberating and fulfilling things you can learn.

"I tell you the truth" signals a solemn declaration of great significance. Pay careful attention. What kind of giving does Jesus applaud?

- **Worshipful giving**

Now this whole episode takes place in the temple ... the "church" for Jewish people, if you will. The treasury was located in the Temple. The giving of the offerings was intended to be part of the worship of the people of God. It is part of our loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

We see this carried over into the churches that are formed as the Gospel spread in New Testament times.

**1 Corinthians 16:2 - On the first day of every week (when the church gathered for worship), each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.**

I know that we offer different ways of giving your offerings. Some bring offerings in envelopes on Sundays. Some give online or at our giving kiosk. But the important thing is that when you do it, it's not like you're paying a bill or ordering a ticket. Do it as an act of worshipping the Lord.

Jesus also applauds...

- **Sacrificial giving**

**Mark 12:44 - They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."**

Interestingly Jesus was not so much impressed with the people who gave large amounts. I supposed He would have been had their offerings been sacrificial. This woman gave the greater gift because it represented a greater sacrifice. Sacrifice is gauged by how much is left over after you give.

When the Apostle Paul wrote II Corinthians he applauded the generosity of some churches in this way:

**2 Corinthians 8:2 - Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.**

**2 Corinthians 8:3 - For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.**

Now that's sacrificial giving. Note: There has to be some planning in the giving of offerings. There is a place for spontaneity in our giving, but to be able to have the resources available to give, whether large or small, requires some ordering of your life. For example, if your financial life is so disordered that you have over-extended yourself financially, you will not have the freedom to give generously and sacrificially.

So Jesus applauds this woman because she "put in everything ... all she had." She was "all in." And we must not lose sight of the fact that that is exactly what Jesus was about to do. He was "all in." In just a few days from this episode Jesus would die on the Cross of Calvary to pay the debt for our sins.

**2 Corinthians 8:9 - For 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.**

Jesus gave up the riches of heaven to come to this earth to become poor by giving up His life, so that we might have the riches of heaven and eternal life. No wonder Jesus applauded this woman's sacrificial giving. But He also applauds...

- **Proportional giving**

**Mark 12:43b - This poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.**

By human calculation what this woman gave was paltry. By divine calculation what this woman gave was extravagant. It said that she gave more than all the others? How can that be? There were others who gave much more in terms of amount. Jesus applauds the proportion of her giving ... 100%.

**1 Corinthians 16:2a - On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income...**

And a good starting place is the tithe (10%). If you trust and obey the Lord in this way watch how the 90% will go farther than if you'd used 100% on yourself. But Jesus also applauds...

- **Humble giving**

There's no indication that this poor woman was trying to attract anyone's attention. As far as she knew, who would ever applaud her offering when other people were giving so much more? But that was not the case with the religious leaders. In fact Jesus had just finished a teaching session in the temple about this very issue. Just look back a few verses in Mark 12 to...

**Mark 12:38 - As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces,**

**Mark 12:39 - and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.**

**Mark 12:40 - They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers.**

Note the reference to widows that they exploit, widows like the woman Jesus applauds for her sacrificial giving.

The historian Josephus recorded that some of the Pharisees, before they made their contribution to the great collection box Jesus was watching here, actually had a trumpeter go before them to get everybody's attention. Then the Pharisees would come up and proudly deposit a bag of gold in the treasury chest.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said don't do your good deeds to be noticed by people. Jesus applauds when we give with humility. But He also applauds...

- **Hopeful giving**

**Mark 12:44 – (She) out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”**

The poor widow gave all she had. How was she going to live the next day? She put her hope in God. The widow knew that God would not fail her. She could have kept one of the coins for herself, but no, she gave everything she had. She obviously trusted God to take care of her as she was obedient and gave out of love for God.

If we as individual believers are focused on engaging with all of our resources, God will supply our needs. And if we as a church are engaged with all of our resources, God will supply our needs. God's work, done in God's way will have God's provision. Let me just remind you of a few verses in II Corinthians 9:

**2 Corinthians 9:8 - And 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.**

God in His grace will give you what you need to live on, and what you need in order to “abound in every good work.” He's talking here about the good work of giving. He goes on to explain...

**2 Corinthians 9:10 - Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.**

So God will give you “seed” to eat and He will give you “seed” to sow. If you lived on a farm and grew wheat, some of that grain that was harvested you could use to make bread. But some of the grain (the seed) you would use to plant for future crops. Are you eating the seed that you're supposed to be planting?

**2 Corinthians 9:11 - You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.**

Notice that you are made rich not so you can just go out and buy more stuff you don't need. You are made rich so that you can be generous and God will be praised as a result. So here's how it works:

**ILLUSTRATION** – I’m going to ask one of our students Rebekah Eudaley to come up on the stage here and help me out. God’s work done in God’s way will have God’s resources. Just think of this tub as God’s Kingdoms work which He will fund. But there’s the deal: God intends to fund His work but putting the funds in your hands and my hands to give. He intends for it to pass through your hands, and for you to learn to trust Him in this. So I’m putting a dime in Rebekah’s hand representing the tithe. But if she clinches that in her hand, when God pours out His resources, none of falls in her hands because she’s clutching what she should be giving away. God never asks you to give what He doesn’t first put in your hands. You don’t have anything that God didn’t give you. And He reserves part of that for Himself that He wants you to use in worshipping Him. His work is going to have His provision, but it will never pass through your hands as long as you’re clutching what He gave you to give. But notice what happens if you give what God gave you to give (Rebekah turns her hand over and pours out the dime, then opens her palm back up; I’ll pour a few more in and Rebekah pours it out on the floor). So with my hands open in generosity God wants to pour more in my hands so I can give more. “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous.” You are not made rich so you can be selfish and stingy and materialistic. You are made rich so that you can be generous. And all this generosity will result in glory to God. As people’s needs are met, God is glorified.