

# Overflow

*Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. (Philippians 4:16-17 ESV)*

*For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (Matthew 25:29 ESV)*

## **The Widow's Mite**

**March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Mark 12:41-44**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to Mark 12.

Over the next three weeks, we will be in a brief mini-series called 'Overflow'. The title of this series flows out of our mission statement as a church:

**We exist to glorify God, making disciples of Jesus Christ in the Southward of Orillia and overflowing to the ends of the earth.**

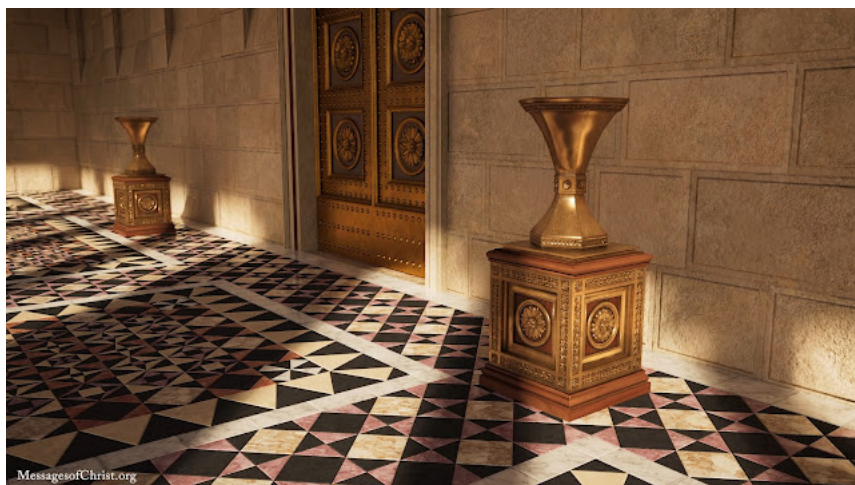
We are a blessed people, and we believe that God has blessed *us* so that the blessing might overflow to *others*. One of the ways that we 'overflow' is through our giving.

Now, thankfully, we're not launching this series because the budget is in crisis. Rest assured, we won't be passing the offering plates around after the service while the elders watch you with furrowed brows. You have historically been a wonderfully generous people, and we are well on our way to meeting the projected budget again this year. By God's grace, this has always been a church that 'punches above its weight' so to speak. So, this is not a *corrective* series.

However, with this three-week window between the close of the Judges series and the week of Easter, we decided that this would be an appropriate time to stop and consider what Jesus has to teach us about money. We've never done a series like this at Redeemer, and yet – as we will see – Jesus *frequently* spoke to his disciples about this topic.

One example of that teaching is found here, in Mark 12. Before I read the passage, allow me set the scene for you. Have you ever seen an episode of undercover boss? Well, our passage for this morning is like that – but on a cosmic scale! Here, Jesus himself – the Maker of heaven and earth – sits and observes his people as they go about their worship. Undercover GOD has entered the temple!

He sits across from the treasury. Within the treasury, there are four collection boxes – each with a receptacle that is shaped like an upward facing horn made of brass. (Show image)



This design prevents people from reaching into the offering box and stealing another person’s gift, but it also causes each offering to make a distinct sound as the metal coins clink and clank down the ram’s horn.

Jesus sits, and he watches as worshippers offer their gifts to the Lord. A fisherman approaches and a distinguishable rattle rings out as he drops his handful of coins into the horn. The same sound is heard as one of the city’s tentmakers offers his gift afterwards. A Pharisee steps forward and – pulling out a small bag from his cloak – pours numerous heavy coins into the horn. The ringing sound from his offering is so loud that other worshippers can’t help but subtly glance over at him. ‘Wow!’ they think to themselves, ‘What an offering!’

But Jesus’ attention is fixed on the other side of the room where, at the farthest receptacle, a widow steps forward to bring her gift. She is a woman with little to no means. Humanly speaking,

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<sup>1</sup> Image found at: <http://www.redeemerofisrael.org/2023/05/the-widows-mite.html>. Accessed on March 4, 2026.

she has very little to offer to the Greco-Roman society that she lives in, and financially speaking, she has very little to offer to the temple treasury.

Still, she steps forward with two small coins in her hand. These are the smallest coins in Greek circulation – their conjoined value less than 1/8<sup>th</sup> of a cent<sup>2</sup>. As she drops her offering into the horn, the sound barely even registers. No one in the room gives any notice to her offering. Embarrassed, but obedient, she makes her way out of the treasury to offer up her prayers to God.

Having witnessed this scene in the temple, Jesus calls his disciples to himself. There is a lesson that he means for them – and that he means for US – to learn from this widow’s example. To that end, look with me now to Mark 12:41-44. Hear now God’s holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today:

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup> And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. <sup>43</sup> And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. <sup>44</sup> For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:41-44 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

If you’ve grown up in or around the church, then you’ve certainly heard this story before. While you may not know the exact language that I’m going to use, you could likely predict what the points of my sermon are going to be this morning. We KNOW this story.

But, brothers and sisters, living as we do in a world that is infatuated with power, size and prestige, I can’t help but wonder if we BELIEVE this story. The more I reflected on this familiar text, that more convinced I have become that there is a needed corrective for us here.

Picture this woman again in your mind’s eye. Everything about her screamed out ‘less’. Less status, less means, less to offer. And yet, in the eyes of Jesus, she was MORE. Her offering

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<sup>2</sup> See William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 442.

surpassed the offerings of all the powerful men and women who worshipped alongside her in the treasury. As commentator James Edwards so powerfully summarizes:

That which made no difference in the books of the temple is immortalized in the Book of Life.<sup>3</sup>

Seeing the faith of this woman, Jesus calls his disciples to himself in order to instruct them. Since we too are his disciples, Jesus means to teach US as well. So, what are we meant to learn? What does this story teach us about giving?

### What Does This Story Teach Us About Giving?

The first lesson that struck me is one that I've often rushed past. We are reminded in this story that:

#### 1. **Jesus witnesses every offering that we bring**

Look again at verse 41:

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. (Mark 12:41a ESV)

I can't help but wonder if the people in the temple that day might have conducted themselves differently had they recognized that God was in the room with them. Would their offering have changed if they knew that God was looking through their gold and silver and assessing instead their hearts and motives?

As I pondered that question, my mind jumped to some of the theological truths that I know in my *mind* but that I tend to forget in my *heart*. Like this truth, for example: Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he said:

And behold, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b ESV)

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<sup>3</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 381.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is no less present in this room than he was in that temple. Now, I *know* that to be true. But does that truth *change* me?

Jesus listened to my heart as I sang to him this morning. Right now, in this moment, he is assessing my motives as I preach to you. And he's watching you. He saw your heart as we stopped to pray for the needs of the congregation. He had a front row seat for each and every time your mind wandered. He sees you now as you sit under the teaching of his word and he will walk with you this week as you respond – or choose not to respond – to what you have heard.

Jesus sat in the temple. And Jesus sits in this church.

Brothers and sisters, our passage for this morning leads us to an obvious probing question: What does he see in our offering?

Perhaps you want to object, 'I think the LAST thing on Jesus' priority list is what I do with my money!' But that objection falls apart as soon as you start reading your Bible. Did you know that eleven of the thirty-nine parables that Jesus told revolve around the topic of money? There's a REASON for that, brothers and sisters, and it's NOT because God is short on finances. Jesus had a lot to say about money because:

where your treasure is, **there your heart will be also.** (Matthew 6:21 ESV)

Your offering is the overflow of your heart. If you want to get a good sense of what a person cares about, follow the money.

And so, Jesus sits, and he watches as we offer our gifts to him. But, what exactly is he looking for? That leads us to the second lesson in this story. We see here very clearly that:

## **2. The value of our offering has little to do with its size**

One of our great problems is that we so quickly forget that the things that *we* think are impressive are really not impressive to God. In fact, if we look back at the text and take a wider view of this

passage, we see that Jesus has just finished arguing this point to his disciples. Look at the paragraph directly before our passage:

And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces<sup>39</sup> and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, <sup>40</sup> who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” (Mark 12:38-40 ESV)

Everything about the Pharisees looked so impressive to the watching world. They dressed with elegance, they were esteemed with respect, they sat in positions of honour, and they prayed long, extravagant prayers! It all LOOKED very impressive to man. But it was nothing in God’s eyes. In fact – worse than nothing – all their show and hypocrisy condemned them in God’s eyes.

Surely we are meant to have them in the back of our mind as we hear Jesus’ assessment in verse 43. Look there again:

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, **this poor widow has put in more** than all those who are contributing to the offering box. (Mark 12:43 ESV)

‘THIS’, Jesus says, ‘is what God is looking for! This is what pleases me!’ Remember, the widow contributed less than a PENNY! And yet – in Jesus’ estimation – her offering was MORE than all the expensive offerings that were presented that day – especially the offerings of the pharisees!

In a moment, we’ll focus on what exactly it was that was so precious about her gift but first let’s hear this needed reminder: As Jesus watches you present him with your offering, his focus is NOT on the size of your gift. WE look at size. WE are impressed with big numbers. But big numbers mean nothing to God. God owns every particle in the UNIVERSE! His are the stars, and His are the oceans. And so – while WE might see an enormous difference between, say, an offering of \$10 and an offering of \$10,000 – those currencies in and of themselves are MEANINGLESS to God.

He is assessing our gift with a different rubric entirely.

Now, perhaps someone in the room is thinking, ‘Got it! The SMALLER my offering, the MORE God values it!’ But that’s to miss the point in the *opposite* direction! Two chapters later, in Mark 14:3-9, a woman offers a VERY expensive gift to Jesus, and he is equally pleased with her.

So, sometimes he is pleased with small offerings. But other times he is pleased with large offerings. The lesson, then, is that SIZE is not the *primary focus* in his rubric.

But what then IS he looking for? That leads us to the final lesson. We see here in this story that:

### 3. **The value of our offering has everything to do with our faith**

Look again at verses 43-44:

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. <sup>44</sup> For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in **everything she had, all she had to live on.**” (Mark 12:43-44 ESV)

Now, before we go any further, I want to fence this for a moment. This woman is commended for giving away all that she has to live on and – taken on its own – a person *might* come away from this story thinking that Jesus is commending *recklessness*. But is that the lesson of this passage? Does he mean for us to learn here that we too should give away ALL that we have to live on in every offering that we bring?

No. That CAN’T be what Jesus means, or else the church would be full of people who are perpetually on the brink of bankruptcy, and that would certainly distract us from the mission. The Bible COMMENDS Christians who manage their households responsibly:

for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (1 Timothy 3:5 ESV)

And CONDEMNS Christians who manage their households irresponsibly:

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is **worse than an unbeliever.** (1 Timothy 5:8 ESV)

So, Jesus CAN'T be commending recklessness here. Let's not misapply this lesson.

But with that caveat in place, we do need to deal honestly with what we see in this passage. This woman DOES give away all that she has. When she put her offering in the box, it likely meant that she would not eat for the rest of the day.

Put yourself in her shoes for a moment. As she rolled the two coins around in her hand, there were likely some intrusive thoughts that objected, 'What is God going to do with my two mites? This is nothing to Him, but I NEED this money! Perhaps I'll bring my offering once I'm in a better financial position. Perhaps I'll just give *one* of these mites rather than *both*.'

Would you have faulted her for that? I certainly wouldn't have. Generosity looks different in different seasons. Nowhere did God obligate her to give everything that she had. She had every right to hold something back.

And yet, she chose to give it all.

In faith, this woman who possessed next to nothing offered up the only two mites that she had.

Like Abraham who laid his son on the altar because he trusted that the Lord would provide; like the widow of Zarephath who gave the prophet Elijah the last meal that her family had to live on; the widow in this story presented to God the offering that truly matters to Him.

Her offering wasn't a performative token to impress others.

Her offering wasn't a begrudging religious obligation.

Her offering that day was an expression of *faith*. As those two mites trickled down into the offering box, she was declaring to God that she trusted Him to provide her daily bread.

Jesus saw that. And he gathered his disciples to himself and said, ‘THAT is the offering that pleases God! He’s not looking at the size of your offering. He’s looking at the size of your FAITH!’

That brings us to the end of the story of the widow’s mite. As I said earlier, this is story that most of us *know* quite well. But sometimes our *head knowledge* does not lead to *heart transformation*. The Apostle James encourages us:

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, **being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.** (James 1:25 ESV)

With the time that we have remaining, I want to think very practically about the implications of this passage for us today.

## Two Practical Implications

First, I want to think about what this means for us *corporately*:

### 1. **Corporate Implication: The size of a church’s budget does not directly reflect the size of a church’s faith**

This may not seem like the most profound implication, but I’ve heard so many iterations of this error that I want to take this opportunity to correct it. It’s common to hear well-meaning Christians say in some form or another: ‘We need to be more *ambitious* with the church budget! Come on! *Where is our faith?!*’ That sounds very compelling, doesn’t it?

Many church budgets have overstretched to unreasonable sums in the name of ‘faith’. And – as a result – many congregants have been overstretched in unreasonable ways to compensate for said ‘faith’.

The problem with this line of thinking – though – is that it is built on the assumption that a BIGGER budget necessarily equals BIGGER faith. That assumption is the same one that Jesus is correcting in this passage – the SIZE of a gift does not directly correlate to the faith of the giver.

Brothers and sisters, there are little country churches with budgets of \$45,000 who exercise GREAT faith! And there are big city churches with budgets of \$15,000,000 who exercise LITTLE faith.

Sometimes churches can adopt a weird, hyper-spiritual attitude toward the budget. As one of your under shepherds here at Redeemer, please believe me when I say on behalf of the elders: Our desire for this church is not that we would have the biggest budget in town. Our desire is simply that our budget will be an appropriate expression of faith. As the economy fluctuates and as people come and go, some years a ‘faithful’ budget will look smaller than the year before. Don’t be rattled by that. Other years, it might double. Don’t be flattered by that. Our concern should not be about the number. Our concern should be about the faith *behind* the number.

And that leads to one last implication from this story. This one is a *personal* implication:

**2. Personal Implication: If your giving does not stretch your faith, then it may be time to reassess your giving**

Let me reiterate that this is not a *corrective* series – meaning – I have no reason to believe that you are not giving faithfully. The pastors and elders don’t see who gives what, and every indication suggests to me that you are all wonderfully generous!

Nevertheless, since there is not a single sinless person in this room, and since money is such a widespread idol in our culture, we need to spend some time reflecting on this lesson.

I imagine – if we could crawl into the minds of the other worshippers in the temple from our passage – that they didn’t feel particularly convicted about their offering to the Lord. In fact, we’re told that their gifts were large! And yet the gift that they gave seemingly required no *faith*. But, why not? Why were their gifts lacking in faith? I think commentator James Edwards is right when he suggests:

In the temple, others gave what they could spare, but the poor widow spared nothing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 382.

Let me ask you – and I’m sitting in this question myself – when you bring your offering to the Lord, does it ever stretch your faith? Whether you are putting your offering in the offering box or sending an e-transfer as you work through the monthly budget, do you ever find yourself looking twice at that gift and praying, ‘God, help me to trust you in this’?

Or have you fallen into the habit of giving God *what you can spare*?

Our passage for this morning challenges us to sit in that probing question for a moment. Does my giving stretch my faith?

If I could encourage you as we conclude, I want to highlight how sweet it is that this story ends the way that it does. There are many ‘gods’ who would have pointed to the large donations and declared: ‘THIS AMOUNT, and no less, is what I require of you!’

But the true God is not like that. Because the offering that He asks for isn’t about meeting His need. It’s about meeting *our* need. Church, as we bring our offerings, we need to remember that *we* need this.

We need to be reminded that everything that we have is from Him and for Him. We need to regularly break ourselves of the idolatry in our hearts that wants to place our trust in money rather than in God. We need to be healed of the selfishness that wants to hoard our gifts rather than sharing them with those in need. We need to – no, we GET to – overflow in generosity!

The God who overflows invites us to be an overflowing people! And that is neither a burden, nor an obligation. It is a tremendous privilege.

Jesus sat in the temple, and Jesus sits in this church. O that he would see faith in us as we bring our offerings forward to him. To that end, let’s pray together.