

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” – Psalm 119:105

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True Giving

Jeff Smith

In **Mark 12:41-44**, we read the familiar account of the widow casting her two mites into the treasury, as observed by the Lord. We get the idea that as Jesus sat down to observe the multitude in their giving, He did so discreetly. This is reinforced by **v. 43**, where He calls His disciples over to Him for this private teaching session on true values.

Before we comment on this actual event, let's set the stage. It is Tuesday during “Passion Week” (what Bible students have come to call the last week of the Lord's life on earth). Jesus had just finished His public discourse about the scribes and their religious pretense, their proud posturing at banquets, and their unscrupulous devouring of widows' livelihoods (**vv. 38-40**). These were but a few of the many warnings Jesus issued about the Jewish leadership during that week. However, what occurred at the treasury afforded Jesus an opportunity to teach on what is true giving.

Many have always interpreted the widow's gift as “more” because she gave a larger percentage than did the rich. I doubt that is the point the Lord was making in His observation to His disciples. Rather, it seems best to say He was discussing one's attitude in giving to God. Since He is God, He knew the hearts of all men (**John 2:25**). How else would He have known the amounts of what was being given? He says the others “*put in out of their surplus*” (**v. 44**). What this means is they were giving to God out of what they didn't need; it was excess, savings. The poor widow, by contrast, gave out of “*her poverty...out of all she had to live on*” (**v. 44**). She gave what was needed for her to live. This was true sacrifice!!

Surely we can see the glaring contrast. It wasn't about the money – all she gave was 1/64 of a day's wage. It was about giving one's self to God, wholly and completely. This was the same attitude possessed by the saints in Macedonia. In their poverty they contributed to the poor saints in Jerusalem. How? Because “*they first gave themselves to God*” (**2 Cor. 8:1-5**).

As the old saying goes, God doesn't want the leftovers. He doesn't even need our money. What He wants is you to give yourself to Him, to submit your will to His will. That is the essence of true giving.

A Heart Set on the Lord

Frank Himmel

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

Jeshua and Zerubbabel led the initial group of Babylonian captives back to Jerusalem. With the help of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they rebuilt the temple. About eighty years later, King Artaxerxes authorized a second group to return under Ezra. His mission was to teach God’s law. Artaxerxes ordered the provincial rulers in Palestine to provide Ezra whatever he needed. The King himself donated funds to pay for operating expenses at the temple (**Ezra 7**).

The Bible emphasizes that Artaxerxes granted Ezra’s requests because *“the hand of the Lord was upon him” (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28)*. And why was God’s hand so favorable toward this priest? Because, as our text explains, he had set his heart on God. That involved three things.

First, **Ezra set his heart to study God’s law**. He was not presumptuous about God’s will. It is not uncommon for people to just assume that God views things the way they do. Some think they have an intuitive knowledge of right and wrong implanted by God. But Jeremiah said, *“I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in man who walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23)*.

God’s thoughts are not the same as ours (**Is. 55:8-9**). If we want to know His will, we must listen to His word. The blessed man is the one whose *“delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:2)*.

Second, **Ezra set his heart to practice God’s law**. It does little good to know God’s will if we do not live it. James likened that to looking in a mirror, then ignoring the needed changes (**Jas. 1:23-24**). *“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (Jas. 1:25)*. Later he added, *“To one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17)*.

Third, **Ezra set his heart to teach God’s law**. That was part of his priestly function (**Dt. 33:8-11**). But it was more: it was another expression of his love for God. Just as Ezra desired for himself the

News and Notes

Members:

- * Virginia Bryant had a rough first of three weeks of therapy, but the doctor said she is doing well with her recovery.
- * Claudia Guest had a scooter accident and fractured her ankle. She also has stitches under her eye and is black and blue.
- * Cotton Read continues to have breathing problems.

Friends and Family:

- * No news known.

Absent: Ken and Vickie Berry (IN), Bill White (VA).

New Reports: Bob Nichols (Japan).

blessings that come from a godly life, he wanted that for others as well.

People with Ezra's heart care about little children, whose hearts must be molded. They are concerned about their peers, who may have had little opportunity to hear God's law. And they are aware that folks who know tend to forget when they are not reminded.

Ezra's heart was set on the Lord. On what is your heart set?



“How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart. They do no unrighteousness; they walk in His ways.” – Psalm 119:2-3