

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on November 7, 2021:**

**"Does Jesus Care What We Place in the Treasury?
[Principles for Healthy Church Giving]
(Mark 12:38-44)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us that together in love, as a family, we become moved by the Spirit to give plentiful offerings to God's church with a cheerful heart.]

Introduction:

- How many of us woke up this morning and said, "I sure hope we have a message on money, today"? (Laughter)
- This message today is straight from the Spirit which had inspired Pastor Craig, who wasn't certain what to speak about.

- This is budget time for next year for our church.
- So, today's title is, "Does Jesus Care What We Place in the Treasury?"
- And we're also going to discuss principles for healthy church giving.

- Now, let's take a look at the background concerning Mark 12:38-44.
- Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem to get together for the Festival of Tabernacle.
- When they arrive at the temple, they go into the temple courts.
- Now, the system back then only allowed the patriarchs to enter into the middle court yard.
- And so, there were various stations along the way and the widows were at their outside station and this is where this event is happening.

Mark 12:38 (NASB), And in His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like personal greetings in the marketplaces, 39) and seats of honor in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, 40) who devour widows' houses,

- The Greek word here means, "gobble up."
- Now the system at that time was where the men owned the wealth and the property.
- And when the men passed away, they would often pass their home to their widows along with some money.
- But, often, the widow's struggled financially.

- And the scribes – the religious leaders – had a system in place to exploit the widows.
- The scribes also didn't dress like the common people did – they had long, flowing robes, so they would be noticed and honored.
- Their whole attitude was corrupt.

40) who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive all the more condemnation."

- So, the message Jesus is sending to the disciples is where to place the emphasis and where not to.
- In that society, the people believed that the rich were blessed by God and it was the rich that were going to make it into the kingdom of heaven.
- And the poor people were considered poor because God had somehow punished them because they weren't obeying the law or they doing what they shouldn't be doing.
- And, so the poor were considered the down cast of society.
- So, Jesus was using this moment to teach his disciples what was really important.

41) And Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and began watching how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large amounts. 42) And a poor widow came and put in two lepta coins, which amount to a quadrans.

- These are coins of small value, which essentially were worth a \$1.80.

43) Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;

- The word "truly" represents something said emphatically in the Greek.
- So, this means that Jesus is making a strong point here.
- What is Jesus telling us?
- Is He concerned about the amounts we give?
- No! So, this is a solid message for us today.
- It doesn't matter how much we give, because there's something far more important, which Jesus will show us.

44) for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

- Now the commentaries will tell you that this poor widow was a foreshadowing of what Jesus would be doing in His sacrifice.

Healthy Church – New Covenant attitude in giving:

- The New Covenant has a completely different take about giving than what is in the Old Covenant.
- The New Covenant tells us about the one attitude that is required – it's giving cheerfully.
- And what does this take? It takes heart.

As With Most Transformation – Giving Cheerfully Takes Heart:

- Now, how many of us feel that during the past few weeks, the Holy Spirit has been uncovering some meaty stuff, as it relates to our transformation?
- Now the paradoxes that Jesus emphasized in His messages and the apostles emphasized in their letters are pointing to a different reality that we live in today.
- In our Western culture, we have a completely different view of what's important in life – such as not suffering, such as being able to say what we think we ought to say.
- And then James tells us about taming the tongues.

- And then Hebrews tells us that out of suffering and out of weakness, we become strengthened.
- So, we're starting to see that it's not intuitive for us to simply give our money away.
- We're not taught that here in the USA.
- Jesus taught that when we give away our money to worthy causes, we need to be cheerful about it.
- In our society that's crazy, but in God's economy, it's not.
- So, let's look at it this way – since God owns all the wealth, which the Psalms tells us, does He need what we give to Him?
- So, why would Jesus make such comments about what the poor widow gave?
- Are the offers we give to God for His benefit or for our benefit?
- Transformation happens when we stretch ourselves outside of our normal comfort zone and let the Holy Spirit change our humanity.
- The Holy Spirit shows us how to live that would be contrary to our normal thoughts.
- Now, in the Old Covenant, the standard giving amount was 10% – a tithe of your resources.
- But in the New Covenant, there isn't a numerical standard, rather it's a heart standard.

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NASB), Each one must do just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- Now, if Pastor Craig pounded on the table with a heavy object and said, "You need to give your money now", will that cause you to give with a cheerful response?
- That doesn't work, does it?
- So, if anyone thinks that Pastor Craig is arm twisting with this message or invoking fear, shame, guilt or doubt, he or she has it wrong.
- And some of these translations will tell you that if anyone did those things, you shouldn't listen to them.
- Rather, Pastor Craig wants to encourage our cheerful attitude through the Spirit.
- The poor widow, who placed her last two coins in to the offering, had to have the Holy Spirit working with her, because she went against human reasoning.

(AMP), Let each one give [thoughtfully and with purpose] just as he or she has decided in his or her heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver [and delights in the one whose heart is in his gift].

- God is saying that as we give is not about the amount but our attitude and how we think about it and how we accept what we're doing.

(Phillips), Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither grudgingly nor under compulsion, for God loves the man and woman who gives cheerfully. After all, God can give you everything that you need, so that you may always have sufficient both for yourselves and for giving away to other people. As the scripture says: "He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness remains forever."

- Part of God's righteousness is taking care of His sons and daughters.

- God did take care of the widow who gave all that she had.

(MSG), Remember: A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop. I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving.

- In these various translations, we're seeing a consistent theme.
- Now scripture also tells us that God will take away our stony heart and give us a heart of flesh.
- And when the Holy Spirit does this, we see things differently especially concerning our money or resources.

(NLV), Each person should give as he or she has decided in his or her heart. A person should not give, wishing he or she could keep it. Or a person should not give if he or she feels he or she has to give. God loves a person who gives because he or she wants to give.

- In the ultimate sense, we don't have to give.
- But knowing that God wants us to give, it's for our benefit when we do.
- Since God owns everything, He doesn't want our money, rather He wants our heart.
- Now when we give God our heart, our thought about things change.

(NLT), You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."

- Pastor Craig again reminded us that he wasn't applying any pressure on us.

(VOICE), Giving grows out of the heart – otherwise, you've reluctantly grumbled "yes" because you felt you had to or because you couldn't say "no," but this isn't the way God wants it. For we know that "God loves a cheerful giver."

- Now, if we give offerings because we feel pressure to do so, then the transformation process is hindered.
- But when we give cheerfully because the Spirit is motivating us, we become transformed.

Healthy Church Giving Principles in place at GCM:

1. Become a first-time giver.
2. Become a consistent giver (consistent \$).
3. Become a percentage giver (consistent % as your income increases).
4. Increase % over time as we're able to.

Giving consistently takes heart:

- This is so important to understand.

GCM Income 2021 (last 12 mos) - Calendar Year Income 2020

Category	2021	2020	\$ Net	%
Income	\$105,243	\$121,166	-\$15,923	-13.14%
Net Giving Households	50	55	-5	-10%
New Giving Households	4		\$927	6%
Lost Giving Households	9*	*0 move away 2 passed away 7 fell away	\$3,911	-25%
Consistent Giving	4/50		% #households:	8%
Increased Giving	21/50		\$5,685	36%
Decreased Giving	21/50		-\$18,680	-117%

- In 2021 (Jan. - Oct. and Nov and Dec of 2020), our income was \$105,243.
- Compared to our net income of 2020, we have a decline of \$15,923 or 13%.
- So, we need to consider why this is happening.
- Now, in 2021, we've had 4 new giving households but we lost 9 giving households.
- 2 households passed away and 7 fell away from giving to our church.
- 21 out of our 50 net giving households increased their giving for an increase of \$5,685.
- However, another 21 out of our 50 net giving households decreased their giving by \$18,680.
- So, our net loss was \$15, 923.
- Pastor Craig thanks all of us for our consistent giving, our attitude of gratitude toward our church and our denomination.
- This is ultimately a Spirit issue and He will decide what we will do in our giving and spending.

Concluding comments:

- Pastor Craig commented that his change of careers from banking to becoming our lead pastor was never a right financial move for him and his wife.
- But it was the right faith move and the absolute right sacrifice move.
- He realizes that life isn't just about finances, but life is about coming together as family – doing what we can to love each other, to support each other and to do God's work by figuring how we can reach out into this neighborhood and make things happen.
- Now, unfortunately, it takes money to reach out into the community.

- Doing what God wants us to do is not always easy. If do things were easy, everybody would be doing it.
 - Now, when the Holy Spirit is leading us to give and give consistently, we feel good about it.
 - So, this coming year, we have a challenge, as the Y is opening up and asking us to reach out into the community with them, we need to turn around our finances.
 - We need to do this together in love and do it together as a family and do it supporting each other
-
- Pastor Craig again commented that when he and Nan moved out here, it wasn't a good financial decision, but they knew that.
 - He came out to California because he felt God had called him to do that.
 - And he felt that God would take care of things, which He is doing.
 - Pastor Craig still believes that this was the right decision for him to make as he loves all of us in the congregation.
 - And he has felt that love reciprocated to him and his family.
 - So, he would take what he is doing now over the banking he did every day of the week, including Sunday.
-
- Now, we have some challenges, but who doesn't.
 - Life is always full of challenges, but we'll work together as a family and resolve our challenges in 2022.
 - Now, let's share communion together. do

Communion by Elder Larry Omasta:

- Good morning everyone, here at the Y and on Zoom.
 - Our Lord and Savior, Jesus, did an amazing thing during what's called "the Last Supper."
 - He introduced what we now call communion.
-
- Jesus is so amazing.
 - Experiencing physical life with us, He knew that we needed physical promptings to remind us, in our busy lives, about the spiritual truths He was giving to us.
 - So He introduced the taking of bread and the cup as often as we can to remind us of the incredible things He accomplished for us.
-
- This was truly amazing, because this was the first time in Jesus' ministry that he actually told His followers to do something ceremonially. Communion is one of our New Covenant ceremonies, baptism being the other.
 - And Jesus led us in that by being baptized.
-
- So, let's look at the spiritual truth behind these physical elements. Let's read about them:

Luke 22:19 (The Passion Translation): Then Jesus lifted up a loaf, and after praying a prayer of thanksgiving to God, he gave each of his apostles a piece of bread, saying, "This loaf is my body, which is now being offered to you. Always eat it to remember me." 20) After supper was over, he lifted the cup again and said, "This cup represents

my blood of the new covenant I make with you, and it will be poured out soon for all of you.”

- We also need to realize that we do this ceremony together to enhance our relationship not only with Jesus but with one another, as well.
- The taking of communion with one another helps us to unite with each other because we need to be reminded that all of us, in Jesus, are one body, not separate bodies.
- Paul reminded us many times that we are no longer a Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, male or female – because we’re all one through our union with Jesus Christ as he did in Galatians 3:28)
- So, now let’s pray over the elements:

Lord, thank you for becoming one like one of us. And thank you for your loving and sacrificial offering of your body which was a complete sacrifice to deliver us from sin now and for ever and ever.

When we partake of the bread and cup, we know your presence is with us and it’s also a reminder of our binding relationship we have with you Lord Jesus, and our loving Father and our Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

We ask you to bless this bread and these cups as they symbolically represent your body and your blood, which is your life, and what you’ve accomplished for us by being on the cross.

And Lord Jesus, help us to continue to share our lives with you and interact with you so YOU can live your life in us through the Holy Spirit and so that YOU can continue to transform us so that we can share YOU and your love with others.

Thank you for giving us these elements of the bread and the cup as a continuing ceremony down through the ages. We praise you and ask this prayer in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen!

- So, now let’s take the bread together, as it represents the broken body of Jesus on the cross for us.
- And finally let’s take the cup of wine or juice, which represents Jesus’ shed blood to reconcile us forever.
- Thank you for participating in this communion service. God bless you all.