



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

November 19, 2023

Our Money Story: Re-Imagine

Recap of sermon from November 19, 2023

Scripture: Leviticus 19:9-10, 25:8-12; Mark 12:38-44

The story from Mark that we shared today—known traditionally as the “Widow’s Mite,” is a common story for stewardship campaigns. There have been countless sermons about this unnamed widow who gave two small coins into the offering at the Temple. Most of these sermons extol the faith and generosity of the poor widow. If it is paired with a passage from Leviticus, it is usually Leviticus 27:30 “All tenth-part gifts (tithes) from the land, whether of seed from the ground or fruit from the trees, belong to the LORD; they are holy to the LORD.”

The Biblical concept of the tithe—or the 10% gift to God—is an important principle. It should be the foundation for one’s giving, and an important starting point when discerning one’s financial support of the church. It is not however, a hard and fast rule that needs to be observed at all costs. When combined with the story of the widow’s mite, the oft-preached message is this: “Give to God (and I mean this church or ministry) 10% of your income, even if it is difficult. Look, even this poor widow was able to do so. You can too.”

This is not my message today. I would argue that when Jesus pointed out the widow, he was not commending her for her faith and generosity. Instead, he was condemning the system, leaders, and institution that would compel her to do so. Giving out of one’s “hopeless poverty” is not what God wants. In fact, the Temple was meant prevent “hopeless poverty” from existing in the first place.

In the paragraph immediately before today’s passage, Jesus condemns the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and for “devouring widows’ houses.” Earlier in the Gospel of Mark, he criticized the leadership for twisting the concept of the tithe into an excuse to not take care of their parents. The widow who gave out of “hopeless poverty” was not a model. She was a symptom of a system that had failed her.

Today, we pair the story of the widow’s mite with the concept of Jubilee, not the tithe. This passage from Leviticus describes a way that people are called to provide a safety net for the poor. Further, it details a system that was intended to pre-

vent people from being trapped in hopeless cycles of poverty. God’s money story is not one of perpetual debt, cycles of poverty, or increasing wealth gaps. Farther along in Leviticus 19 provides a series of guidelines regarding farming, wage paying, and legal matters. It is a guideline for holy living that includes “You must not take revenge nor hold a grudge against any of your people; instead, you must love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.”



Jubilee, (Lauren Wright Pittman) used with permission Sanctified Art LLC

God’s story of money is that is to be used as a tool to make sure all are protected and cared for. Money is but one of many ways to “love your neighbor as yourself.” The purpose of giving to the Church is not to build a bigger, more spectacular church. It is not to make sure that leaders can wear their long robes and go to fine banquets (again, read the paragraph preceding this one in Mark).

Giving to the Church is meant to support a system of care, hospitality, and love. Giving money to the church is meant to help provide community, worship that is sincere and inspiring, train leaders, and empower discipleship. We give not out of hopeless poverty, but because in giving we are working toward a world without hopeless poverty.

We give because we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. So consider the tithe. Reflect on what that means to you, but not to earn favor, make the offering plate jingle, or add to the prestige of the Church. Give because we can imagine a world where there are no hopeless widows pouring out their last pennies.

Next Week: RESTORE
Genesis 33:1-17 and John 21:1-19