

## Session 5

June 30, 2019

### THE POOR WIDOW: FAITH THAT GIVES

#### Luke 12:13-21; 21:1-4

Being selfish with our possessions is a part of our sinful human nature. How old does a child need to be before he jerks a toy away from a potential intruder with a harsh “Mine!” Sadly, many adults have never quite grown out of the “No...it’s mine” mentality. Recent statistics show that average church attendees give only about 4% of their annual income to the Lord’s work (compare that to the 23% required of God’s people in the Old Testament!) It seems ironic that believers will trust God with their eternal destiny, but not trust Him with material possessions; especially when it comes to money!

This week’s lesson focuses on the exercise of faith in our giving. Luke 12 offers some principles to combat a *selfish attitude*, and Luke 21 offers a *selfless example* of godly giving.

**A selfish attitude (Luke 12:13-21).** The exchange between the unruly interrupter and Jesus is filled with nuggets of truth worth sifting through. First, he assumed that Jesus would use His influence to leverage his older brother into giving in to his demand (v.13). Second, he did not understand that Jesus taught spiritual truth, rather than dabbling in earthly (or private) politics (v. 14). Third, he demonstrated his own greed as the no-doubt younger brother who saw his father’s inheritance and his brother’s vulnerability as a source of his own wealth (v. 15). Fifth, in the Lord’s reply, He contradicts the prevalent idea of that day (and maybe ours?) that a lavish life equals a quality life (v. 15).

Likewise, the parable Jesus used in response is filled with truth. First, like the man He was responding to, the rich farmer in the parable was greedy and looking for ways to increase his bounty (v. 18). While being profitable is not sinful, the farmer’s motive was. His dream was a selfish, lavish, “eat-drink-and be merry” lifestyle (v. 19). Next, the farmer is confronted with two astounding truths: (1) his days were numbered (in this case, to one!). Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth;” and (2), how foolish it is to build earthly wealth while neglecting investing in eternity. When his lavish life suddenly ends, what good are his earthly goods then? (see Matt. 16:26).

**A selfless example (Luke 21:1-4).** In contrast to those seeking to increase their wealth, we see in the story of the widow’s mites one increasing her piety. Mark’s account says that Jesus had placed Himself in a position where He could see the treasury, an area of the temple containing money chests both for required taxes and tithes, and for freewill offerings. The chests were commonly called “trumpets” because of the shape of the brass opening in each. While these openings made it easy to deposit coins, they also provided a very satisfying “clang” for those interested in drawing attention to the amount they were supposed to be giving discreetly (see Matt. 6:3). For this reason, it was easy for everyone to notice that “rich people were putting in large sums” (Luke 21:1; Mark 12:41). The description of the heroine in our story is simple but telling. Each detail is noteworthy: she was both poor and she was a widow (v. 2). Whether she was poor *because* she was a widow is irrelevant. Simply put, her poverty was both in family and in finances. She dropped in only two small coins (v. 2), no doubt unnoticed among the trumpet-clanging of the rich folks. Yet her gift surpassed all of the others’ (v. 3), because it was given out

of her want, rather than her surplus. Finally, her gift was a sacrificial act of faith. That she gave “all she had to live on” demonstrates that she was looking to God—and God alone—to supply her needs, right down to her next meal.