

Learning to give from my living, not from my abundance

Text: Mark 12:41-44

By Bob Young

We are being tested. I will not be so bold as to affirm that God is testing us, but our hearts are being tested. Our generosity toward God and others is being tested. Several times in the past several weeks, I have spoken to individuals who were quite concerned that the stock market rally has sputtered and that the market has in fact given back over 10% of its value in a recent decline. Yesterday, I heard it again, "The market is down another 300 points."

We now have the opportunity to learn about giving from our living rather than from our abundance. The words of Jesus concerning the widow's offering take on new meaning. Jesus' words come off the springboard of his warning against the teachers of the law. They were not paid a wage, but were dependent upon contributions, a system they had learned to abuse, especially with regard to widows who were more vulnerable in the first century culture. Jesus does not address why the widow has few resources, but one can imagine that it may be because she has been taken advantage of by the religious leaders. Nonetheless, she continues to give. He says she gives everything. The story makes clear that giving is a matter of desire, not a matter of ability. Giving comes first from the heart, not from the pocketbook or bank account.

In our early married life, Jan and I knew about giving from our living. We had limited resources, but we were committed to give from what we had. I remember how hard it was to give \$5 when a church paid a preacher student \$50 for a preaching appointment. I remember those times when our conversations and prayers turned to finances, because the pressures of living and giving were becoming unmanageable. God has blessed us. Today we mostly give from our abundance. Perhaps that is to our shame.

Consider these principles.

- Genuine generosity is giving that comes from the heart, not from ability.
- God honors "heart" giving.
- God rejects the human way of measuring which focuses on ability more than heart.
- God is not opposed to those who give out of their abundance, but giving should never be a source of comparisons or self-satisfaction.
- God does not expect us to give so that we become poor.
- God notices and blesses the generous giver.

Pray that God will allow you to continue to be generous. Be thankful when you can give from abundance. Learn to give from scarcity. Depend always on God.