

Giving To God

In Mark 12:38-14, Jesus has stationed himself by the contribution boxes in the temple. There He has with a front row seat to watch people giving their money. He sees plenty of rich people dropping in lots of money. Big checks. Bulging contribution envelopes. How wonderful! God's causes can always use money. But then, as Jesus is sitting there, a poor tired widow quietly appears. She throws her last two pennies into the offering box. There, she's done it. Everything for God. And Jesus remarks, as we might expect, that she has given more than anybody, because she has given everything that she has.

As Jesus stands watching people give their money, He doesn't even mention the temple budget or whether the money given will be put to good use. Jesus focuses on the people. Many rich people gave much. There is nothing negative about that. Jesus sees rich people giving and He doesn't breath a word of criticism. But to get at the heart of what giving is all about, Jesus singles out this inconspicuous widow, dropping in her paltry offering. What she gave represented her whole life. You see, our budgets are statements of our faith. Our spending shows what we really believe in. It has been said that the last thing to get converted is one's wallet. God does use the money we give to build His Kingdom. God uses our contributions to feed the poor, heal the sick, and nurture His people in faith.

God also uses our giving to change us. It doesn't change our IQ or make us any better looking. The money we give, however, does draw us closer to Him. When we give, even our modest contributions, it is a way of saying "Thank you, Lord" and "I love you." Our giving, then, is not only an expression of our faith but also a prayer of thanksgiving for all that God has given us. As with any prayer, we are opened to the transforming power of God. We grow into who He has made us to be. We give, but God gives back infinitely more. It is the sacrificial giving of the widow which Jesus admires. Her gift of two pennies are an act of worship. Her gift of two pennies is the most beautiful prayer of thanksgiving that our heavenly father could ever hear.

The Rev. Bert Eaton is Rector of St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church , located at 503 W. Broad St. in Swansboro.