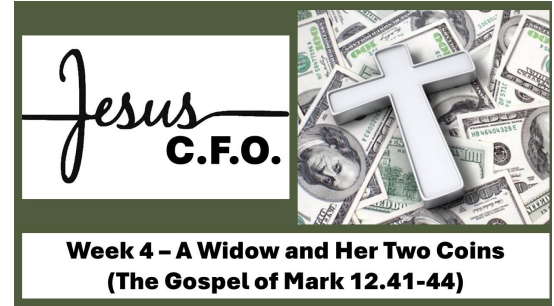


Jesus C.F.O (Week 4): A Widow and Her Two Coins
Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Bullet Points or less



1) We finished up our series on what the Gospels have to tell us about money and stuff with a well-known story from the last week of Jesus' life - a story about a widow who gave her last two coins to the Temple treasury.

2) After observing big givers to the temple treasury and the one widow's valueless gift of two lepta, Jesus offers up a strange kind of heavenly bookkeeping to His disciples: what counts most is not the quantity of the gift, but its spiritual quality.

3) This largely hinges on two English words that begin with the letter "s": do we give out of our surplus, or do we give as a sacrifice?

4) Reflecting that "surplus or sacrifice" differentiation, when her church was facing a major expense, one United Church of Christ pastor, Martha Spong, and her spouse decided how much to give using this question: "What are we willing to give up in order to give more?"

5) John Calvin, the great Protestant reformer, wrote about this episode in Mark 12 that "the widow teaches the poor that their gift is valuable, even if small, and the rich that their gift may not be as valuable as they think, even if big."

6) We often read this beautiful story about a heroine widow in isolation, but that doesn't reflect its full intent. In its original form, there were no chapter or paragraph breaks, nor any verse enumerations, and this vignette is meant to fit and flow seamlessly with what comes before and after it.

7) Immediately prior to the episode of the widow and her two coins, Jesus calls out the religious leadership and the rich for running roughshod over widows just ours in the story (see Mark 12.40), demonstrating that generosity, even if lavish, is only spiritual window dressing if it comes at the expense of others, e.g. exploitation and/or social irresponsibility.

8) Immediately after the widow gives her two coins to the temple, Jesus and His entourage leave the temple. As they do, one disciple marvels at the grandeur of Herod's temple, prompting Jesus to proclaim that it was a doomed enterprise. Forty years later, Jesus was proven right...and every financial gift to the temple - from the many rich and even our widow - were wasted.

9) At the very least, this makes us pause and realize that the character of an institution to which people give must be worthy of those gifts. If not, the generosity of God's people is all for naught.

10) Dr. F. Douglas Powe, writing for The Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, calls this the two-sided "sacred trust" that exists between the giver and the organization to which they are giving. Both must be characterized by integrity, and both must be worthy of the other's trust.

Explore More this Week

1) Probably the most significant thing you can do over the next week or so, especially in light of the forthcoming "spend-a-thon" that is Christmas, is review what we've covered in the series as a whole.

Each week, we've pulled out 2-4 principles from the stories or Jesus' teaching. You could even make a master list of all four weeks, if you like.

Then prayerfully consider what one or more concrete steps you want to take in trying to live by and live out some of these principles. If you have a spouse or family, ask them to join you in this.

The learning isn't complete until we apply, use, and embody it. Let's just see if the eternal, heavenly wisdom of Jesus can change your approach and emotions about money....

2) Scatter these daily devotionals throughout your week, all drawing from the story we covered yesterday. They'll help you stay connected to this powerful story all week long:

- [It's Bigger than You Thought](#)
- [This Poor Widow](#)
- ["Old Woman Jesus"](#)
- [The Widow's Might](#)

3) From The Presbyterian Outlook, here's a full study, complete with discussion questions...very family/kid friendly: [Learning from a widow's faithfulness – Family faith formation for November 7, 2021](#)

4) For the curious, here are two articles from The Lewis Center for Church Leadership on how Christian institutions, like a church, can operate in a way that demonstrates financial integrity to its givers:

- [6 Touchstones of Financial Integrity for Churches](#)
- [7 Key Questions for Fundraising with Spiritual Integrity](#)