

# Stewardship

## November 11, 2018

**Our Savior's Way**  
**Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM**  
**Pastor Mann**

It is a warm (Saturday) Sabbath morning in the city of Jerusalem. It's not hot yet. The sun is still low in the sky. But the people are already lined up, all the way down the dusty road and up the steps leading to the temple. The smell of smoke is in the air because of the animals that have already been sacrificed on the altar. The line moves slowly. Rich and poor alike are ushered into the courtyard where the collection boxes stand against one wall. The boxes have metal horns, like a trumpet, sticking out of the top to receive the offerings of the people. As you can imagine the coins make a constant clanging noise as they are cast into the metal boxes—a noisy offering. The line moves quickly. People throw their coins into the trumpets and move on. But one person, who has already given his offering stands over to the side watching. He is there with his 12 disciples. And notice, our text does not say that Jesus is watching WHAT everyone is giving. He is watching HOW they are giving their offering. Rich men put in many coins that make loud clanging noises. People are impressed by their generosity. So, it is no surprise that no one seems to notice the frail little lady that makes her way to the offering boxes. But one person notices her—the One who sees it all. This poor widow woman reaches into a tiny bag and takes out two insignificant coins—mites—the smallest coins used in the Roman Empire. They make a faint click as they are dropped into the offering box—but the sound is drowned out by the heavy clanging of more substantial offerings. No one notices her. No one is impressed by her tiny offering. But Jesus is impressed. He is so impressed that he singles out this woman. Jesus says, “Her offering is worth more than all the money put in by all these other wealthy people. Because,” Jesus says, “she

gave all she had.” Jesus uses this as a teaching moment for his disciples. The story is recorded in the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke and so this poor woman and her offering of two mites have a place in history.

After hearing this story, you might ask, “Why did Jesus single this woman out—out of all the people who came to give their offerings that day? Why did he hold her up as an example? And what was he trying to teach his disciples? There’s a story I heard about Thanksgiving and Butterball Turkeys. The Butterball Turkey Company has a hotline that you can call if you have questions about cooking your turkey for Thanksgiving. (If you are interested the number is 1-800-BUTTERBALL.) This lady called the hotline. She wanted to know if it was safe to cook a turkey that had been in her freezer for 23 years. The operator told her that it was probably safe if the freezer had been kept below 0 degrees for the entire time. But the operator warned, even if it was safe, the flavor had probably deteriorated, and she wouldn’t recommend eating it. The caller replied, “That’s what we thought. So, we’ll just give it to the church.” APPLY: Why does that strike us as funny? She was giving that turkey to God, wasn’t she? The offering was still good, wasn’t it? So why do we laugh at her offering? Because we know that even though the turkey was “technically” safe to eat, it wasn’t going to taste good and it wasn’t going to smell good.

The Old Testament Book of Leviticus is a book that talks about giving offerings—burnt offerings, grain offerings, fellowship offerings. And over and over again in the Book of Leviticus, we read that these offerings gave off an “aroma pleasing to the Lord.”

Lev. 1:9 talked about the Burnt Offering that was to be offered to God. When properly prepared this burnt offering would offer up an “aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

Lev. 2:2 describes the Grain Offering. When properly prepared this grain offering would offer up an “aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

Lev. 3:5 tells us about the Fellowship Offering. When properly prepared this fellowship offering would offer up an “aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

Lev. 4:31 introduces the Sin Offering. When properly prepared this sin offering would offer up an “aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

Ex. 29:18 tells of the sacrifices that were to consecrate the priests for service. You got it: When properly prepared this sacrifices would offer up an “aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

When Noah offered up his sacrifice after the flood, it says that “the LORD smelled a sweet savor; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake.” God wants the offerings we give him to taste good and smell good.

So, here’s the question: What makes an aroma pleasing to the LORD? Wait a minute—why are we talking about offerings? What we give is our own business! Let’s just forget this and talk about something of real spiritual importance--like prayer or love! Did you know that in the Bible prayer is mentioned 371 times; love is mentioned 714 times; giving is mentioned 2162 times. What we give is important to God. And he does watch.

I can remember back in 6th grade Sunday school. My Sunday school teacher was Mrs. Toivenen. One Sunday morning she brought a pan of brownies to our class. As the goodies sat tantalizingly over by her chair she gave every child in the class a slip of paper marked with a household expense: house payment, phone bill, credit card bill, food, etc. My slip had “car payment” on it.” Before long Mrs. Toivenen picked up the tray of fresh brownies and began naming the expenses written on each slip of paper. As we gave her our expense slips, she gave us a brownie from the pan. Finally, the last brownie in the pan disappeared. But one boy in the class—his name was Joe (and this was Mrs. Toivenen’s son)—he still had his slip of paper. “God,” called out Mrs. Toivenen. Joe came forward hoping that his Mom had one more brownie hidden somewhere. But with a knife, Mrs. Toivenen scraped together the crumbs from the bottom of the pan and

brushed them into Joe's napkin. Joe got a pretty rotten deal, that day—just the crumbs! “The brownies represent your money,” Mrs. Toivenen explained to us. “If you don't give God his share right away, he probably won't get anything at all, except maybe the crumbs.” We never forgot that illustration from our 6th grade Sunday school class. It was the day my friend Joe got only brownie crumbs, and I learned how important it was to put God first. In the years since then, I have struggled with giving and priorities, but whenever I remember that “crummy” Sunday morning lesson, I know who should come first in my life.

Too often I forget and take for granted how richly God has blessed me. There is something about our human nature that makes us focus on what we don't have or what we want to have or what we think we should have. I'm glad we have this month of November and Thanksgiving to re-center our lives and remind us to thank God for what we do have—for what He has given to us. The greatest gift, of course, is His Son Jesus to be our Savior. If God gave His Son for me and for you, how could we ever think of holding back from Him? I know, I'll never truly be like that poor widow woman in the Gospel— “she gave all she had to live on.” But I do want to put God first in my life. I want to honor Him with my gifts. And I want my offerings to be an “aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

Today is Veterans Day and we pause to say “Thank you” to our veterans.