



## OCTOBER 24, 2021

### *Generosity Campaign ~ Week 4*

## Everything is Sacrifice

by Gaven Sublet

All throughout scripture, we are faced with the constant reminder that the state of our hearts is truly what determines where we stand with God. Theoretically, a person could have all of the right actions on display and do many of the things scripture calls us to do, yet all the while being far from God. The determining factor between a person who looks like they are living their faith and a person who is truly submitted to Jesus is something that we as humans can't see at all: the heart. Even in the Old Testament, when people were required to travel to the temple and commit different kinds of sacrifices unto the Lord, God makes it very clear in Psalm 51:16-17 - "For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and contrite heart, God, You will not despise."

When Jesus is with His disciples at the temple (Mark 12:41-44), they watched as the crowd came to the temple to tithe their money. Jesus verbally acknowledges the old woman as she approaches the temple treasury and drops in two copper coins. For context, these two coins were each worth about 1/128th of a day's wage. Both of the coins together equal about one penny USD. Yet the statement that Jesus makes in vs. 43-44 is profound and seems contradictory: "Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned.'"

This is one of the profound mysteries of the Gospel. Our Lord makes a statement of truth that, on the surface, seems to be a contradiction, but when you dive into the true meaning, the actual mystery is that there is no contradiction at all. How is it that by monetary measurements this woman gives less than what everyone else seemed to be giving? But the God of the universe, in all of His wisdom, looks at this woman and tells His disciples, "This poor widow has put in more than all the contributors."

I'm thoroughly convinced that I have one of the best seats in the house at UHBC. I love serving the college ministry more than any other place I have ever been called to serve before because I get to witness this type of sacrifice being put on display on a daily basis through my students. One day it hit me - "When you don't have much to give, it doesn't matter how much you give; everything is sacrifice." Much like most of us who are reading this, we all have fond memories of being in college. If your

college experience was anything like mine, I learned infinitely more outside of the classroom than I ever did inside of the classroom. Don't get me wrong, I believe that Sam Houston offers a plethora of programs to choose from with some of the best instructors I've ever had. However, during my time in college, I was able to learn a great deal about myself. Being broke was part of the fun - eating a lot of the same meals multiple times a week, finding the cheapest and weirdest combinations of food to make spread barely passable as a meal, and figuring out who had the best weekly discounts or what organization was serving a free meal and when. We had it all mapped out, and since we were all poor together, it didn't feel as poor.

Now we all look back and laugh at how we struggled but were still joyful. You can't find your joy in something you don't have. That goes for Jesus, but it also applies to money as well. We literally could not find our joy in it because we barely had enough to cover rent, eat food, and maybe see a movie or do a fun activity with our friends when we weren't studying.

Very much like this poor widow, the college students in our church have hardly any money. I think that being in the situation they're in, they've grasped a hold of a concept I've since forgotten since I got my first "big boy" job. God loves a cheerful giver. The poor widow was so thankful for what God had done in her life, and she gave out of the abundance of gratitude. It wasn't because she thought it was going to come back to her more than what she put in. It wasn't because she had such a large amount that she wanted people to see what she gave. It wasn't even because she knew she was going to have plenty left over when it was all said and done. No. When she had to choose between what the world deems as necessary, she chose to give.

What we learn by looking at this text is that Jesus was more concerned with her willingness to give than the proportion she had; that is what made it worth more in His eyes. At the end of the day, aren't we here to please God and not man? So yes, give, but be sincere in your giving. Consider all God has done in your life and how far He has brought you. When you give from the proper place in your heart, everything is sacrifice.

**"When you  
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# Downsize?

by Clay West

A word of warning: this article will make you very uncomfortable! Ok, you’ve been warned. As many of you know, Elisa and I live in Conroe so I commute about 35 minutes each way to the church. That time provides me opportunities for mental preparation for the day, reflection on a challenging day, and of course, an unlimited supply of podcasts! I heard one recently on the Desiring God podcast by John Piper (another warning, he’s a Calvinist) entitled, “Should Rich Christians Downgrade Their Lifestyle?” Ouch! Working on the curriculum for our series on generosity, The Miracle of a Generous Heart, has me diving into some very uncomfortable situations, like this one:

“For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:25) Yikes! Or this one: “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.” (Luke 6:24) Man, o man! Jesus even tells the rich to sell all they have and follow Him (Matthew 19:21).

Here’s the reality: most of us reading this article fall into the “rich” category, especially in terms of global wealth. It seems like Scripture is consistently pushing us to confront the idea of money and freedom. That is, are we bound to the material things of the world or are we truly free to use our wealth as a means to a greater end, namely generosity? Acts describes the early church as a sort of utopian society where they lived out their new life in Christ. Didn’t these people have jobs, responsibilities, retirements to consider? And yet, “All those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.” (Acts 2:44-45)

Again, “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. For there was not a needy person among them, for all of who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had any need.” (Acts 4:32, 34)

I don’t know about you, but this seems a little extreme to me! Extremely beautiful. The early church was exhibiting a deep freedom in Christ. It was this freedom that allowed them the perspective to see that all they had was from God (Psalm 16:2). This perspective enabled them to let go of the material things of the world and instead use them for good. They had learned to be generous.

Now the uncomfortable part. It is clear that the world knows we are Jesus’ followers by the way we love each other (John 13:35). One of the ways love is exhibited among the brethren is through generosity. God the Father is forever the provider for His children. He promises that we will always have what we need (Philippians 4:19).

So why do we strive for wealth? Why don’t we share it? What exactly is enough? Why does a Christian live in a million dollar home and drive a six figure vehicle? Because they can? Am I bitter because I can’t (LOL)? How do we reconcile this common, present day reality with the teachings of Scripture?

Maybe it is time to downsize the house and simplify the vehicle. I told you it would get uncomfortable. Here’s some good news:

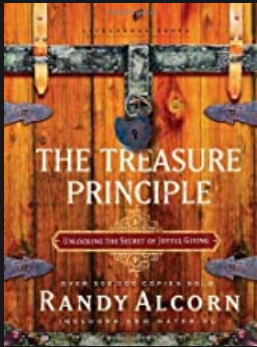
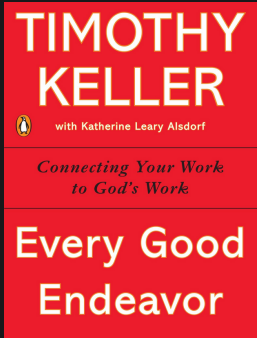
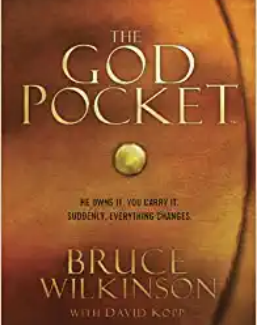
“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

This is speaking to every single one of us because we have all been gifted with wealth of differing levels. Just as a millionaire seems wealthy to you, you in turn seem wealthy to another. So, brothers and sisters, let’s use that wealth to do good, to be generous and ready to share, and to store up for ourselves treasures that really matter.

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1 Timothy 6:17

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