



King Jesus-Part 10
Giving Gifts Fit for Royalty
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Perhaps you've heard in the news as we approach the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun, that the artifacts were on tour again, at least another segment of them, 150 or so artifacts, opening this weekend here in Los Angeles at the California Science Center for people to go through there, buy their tickets and check it all out. Here was this king, of course, as you know, King Tut buried with all of these treasures. There are over 5,000 catalogued artifacts in his tomb, which was a small one compared to the other kings of Egypt, the pharaohs. This was a, I mean, just the estimate on the worth of the jewels and the gold and the silver alone, they say it's hard to even calculate. It's crazy. Reminds me of a story of a gal who had a very, very rich businessman husband who died. Before he died, he said I really want to be buried with all of my money. He was greedy, of course, as well as successful. Of course everyone had heard that story and it seemed like he was half joking. Then he got serious the older he got he said, "No, I want to be buried with all my money." So after the funeral, some of the extended family and some of the friends asked the widow, "Did you bury your husband with all of his money?" And she kind of looked down and said, "Yeah, I did." And they said, "Well, you're a fool. Why would you... Why would you do that. What a waste." She said, "Don't worry, I wrote him a check."

So, all I can say is when it comes to King Tut's tomb, they didn't write a check for that one. I mean, that was full of very, very expensive... They can't even quite quantify the kinds of riches they put in there. Now, if you go back to your junior high or high school study of Egypt, you're going to ask yourself, "Why did they put all that in this tomb?" And they're going to tell you, "Well, because of the belief in the afterlife and, you know, they need all those things in the afterlife." I understand there is a theology that underlies their understanding of the afterlife and all of that. But when it comes down to it, really, I mean a big part of why they did this is because, to them, this was their divine king. Their view of King Tut and all the other kings they buried was, "He is the ultimate supreme authority in all of the world." As a matter of fact, as they kind of blur the line between gods and man, that was their deified king. And so for them it wasn't a waste. I mean they weren't going to say, "Well, this is terrible, it goes to waste." No, this is the king. He is worthy of all the treasures of Egypt, that's the concept. Now that's a mentality that is far removed from the modern era. Right?

Particularly, if you think about Christians, at least in theory, we talk about the fact that Jesus is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. We recognize that he is, at least on the pages of Scripture in certain verses, he's worthy of all glory and riches and wealth and honor and power and dominion and all the rest. But when it comes down to it, I mean let's be practical, there are limits to the way in which I'm going to express that, let's not be ridiculous. There's a lot of that pragmatic thinking that you don't find, even in the medieval church, when they try to express their theology and their majestic view of their God through even their architecture and the way they built their worship centers, very different than it is now.

And yet there is a story that sits between two major sections of what's going on in the last week of Jesus' life here in his earthly ministry, that really is a picture of someone giving so extravagantly, Jesus took the time to record it for us by his words and have Luke and also Mark and very clearly in the Gospels say, Now, here is what Jesus said about this one person, a widow. I know you know the story. We get the little phrase the "Widow's Mite" from this passage. She puts in her offering and it's so dramatic that Jesus makes a lesson out of that, as he gives his very brief commentary on it. I

say it sits between two major sections of the book and we're transitioning this week from our last series, which has been a 10-part series, starting with the triumphal entry of Christ as he comes into Jerusalem, presents himself as the King, fulfilling all the prophecies of Zachariah Chapter 9:14, even the things that we saw in the book of Malachi. We saw all these messianic prophecies coming together as he comes and presents himself on the Temple Mount as the King and then he shows his authority by tipping over the tables saying, basically, this is my house. Right? Even from the age of 12 he was talking about this being my Father's house, I should be here, this is where I'm at. He comes in and says, "I know you guys think you're in charge, scribes, Pharisees, leaders of Israel, but I'm going to do what I think is right here for this Temple Mount." Then he starts teaching and people are hanging on his words, some of them, and some of them are attacking him and trying to back him into a corner with hard questions. He asks a question himself, after he had silenced his critics, making clear who he is, as not just the son of David, but also the Son of God. He says some very stern things to wrap up Chapter 20.

Then we have this story that kind of sits between a new section we'll start week after next, as we see him talking about the forecast of not only what's going to happen to Jerusalem in 70 A.D. but things that are centuries yet to come, and even from our perspective, have yet to be fulfilled. All that's coming up a couple of weeks from now, but right now we have this one story, four verses. I'd like you to turn there and see if we can learn something about why God might have recorded this in his Word for us.

Luke Chapter 21 verses 1 through 4, that's all we'll be able to cover today as we think about King Jesus riding in, presenting himself as King, and Jesus takes time to comment on the giving. Verse 1. "Jesus looked up and he saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box," reading here from the English Standard Version. Verse 2 now says, "and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins," in Greek, the "leptons", the little smallest denomination of currency in the first century. Some translations, alternative translations, talked about the "Widow's Mite," a very small denomination. Verse 3, and Jesus is going to comment now. "He said, 'Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them'" All of them? Who's them? Antecedent, back to verse 1, "the rich people putting in their gifts." Verse 4. He continues, "For they all contributed out of their abundance." They were rich. "But she, out of her poverty, put in all that she had to live on."

Now, I think there are some very helpful things to derive from this passage. But before we do it and I hate to step out of our Sunday morning fare and get into something that feels more like a Thursday night Bible study, but let me have you, for just a little bit, get yourself in the sandals of the first century people who would sit here on the Temple Mount and put money into an offering box. We need to know how that works. Because you can't just read a passage like this and say, "Offering box. Well, I know, we modern churches, we have offering boxes too," and make parallels that maybe we shouldn't make or maybe some parallels we should make. But we've got to understand giving and how it worked. The offerings then, in the Old Testament, and now.

So, number one, if you're taking notes and I wish you would this morning, lots of information that may be helpful as your kids say to you, what's the difference between the tithing and the Old Testament and giving in the New Testament. You should be able to briefly and concisely answer that question and know it for yourself. Because a lot of people have confusion as they open their Bible, kind of hunt around for passages about giving, we need to know the difference. Number one in your outline, I put it this way, we need to "Rethink Offerings Old & New," let's think that through. Rethink offerings old and new. The same word is used, let's figure out the distinction.



So let me start, just historically, and paint you a picture here. In the first century, if you're going to be giving, before Christ died on a cross. When he died on a cross, he breathed his last, he said, "It is finished," and then something happened on the Temple Mount. Most importantly, the curtain that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was torn. So, something ended there, but at the prior days, months, weeks, even hours before that, we lived in the New Testament under the Old Testament rules as it relates to the ceremonies and requirements of the Levitical priesthood, the temple, offerings, sacrifices, all of that, was all in vogue until that moment of his death. So we got to go back to the Old Testament to figure out what's going on in terms of giving. We've got to go, actually, 100 years before King Tut when you had Moses bringing his people out of Egypt as slaves. And now, he begins to teach them God's commands requiring the giving of the people to God. Now, the word you're going to think of, it's the word I dropped earlier, and that's the word "tithe."

Now when you think of the word tithe, you need to know what it means. I know most of you do, but for those of you who don't, it means a 10th, the word tithe means 10th. So any time you read in the Old Testament they brought their tithe into the temple or their tithe into the storehouse of God, you need to know what they're saying is that they brought their 10th. That assumes you know a 10th of what? The 10th of their income, the 10th of their grains, the 10th of their fruit, the 10th of their cattle. They would bring one 10th of their income and bring it to God. Now there are instructions about the 10th or the tithe, and the first one that comes in the Scripture is the clear teaching that out of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, there is one tribe that can't engage in the same kind of commerce that the other 11 can. And what is that? That's when they go into the fields with property that they own and have cattle, they're shepherds, they're farmers, all of that, the Bible says, is not allowed for the Levites. The Levites were to become the spiritual leaders, the teachers, the scribes, the people who would facilitate worship. And as he set all that up, he says, "What we're going to do is take a 10th from all of Israel, those 11 tribes, and we're going to let that 10th go to the Levitical tribe, and the Levitical tribe, though they won't own property, they won't be farmers, they won't be shepherds, they will have their income that's subsidized by the other 11. So that's the 10th, to support the Levites.

If you read carefully in the Bible, you'll find there's a different tithe, another tithe that is required of Israel. That's the tithe to underwrite all the operations of the nation.

Now go back to Israel, in your mind, when it was just being established under Moses, at least the whole system of leading, adjudicating disputes, enforcing the laws and all the precepts and principles of the people. Of course, at the center of it was this thing called the tabernacle that was their center of worship. All of that needed to be underwritten, all the practical expenses, including the judges, so to speak, those adjudicators of problems, they were all to be funded, whatever the needs were, whether it was paying for the shewbread or the oil or the special spices to go into the anointing oil for the prophets and the future kings, all of that was paid for by another 10th. So you had a 10th to go to support the livelihood of the Levites, you had a 10th that went to the operation of the tabernacle that would later become the temple under Solomon, and all the expenses that related to the nation. Well, by the time we got to Solomon, we had a king. When you had a king, it obviously went to all the things you would expect in a nation, including a standing army and having military machines and all the rest, that was basically what you had to give if you were part of Israel so your nation could function.

Believe it or not, now it's getting really scary, there was a third tithe that was required. And if you just want, in short, a way to kind of bridge the gap to where we are today, you might want to call



this the Social Security and Medicare, MediCal tax. It was every third year as a triennial tithe and it was to go basically to support those who had problems. They were troubled, they were indigent, they were not able to somehow provide for themselves. That was the triennial Social Security tithe, if you will. And you're saying you're using the word tithe a lot but it really sounds like a tax. Now you got it. It's basically a tax. It's compulsory, it's required and every Israelite is supposed to do it and, if you add those up, you've got 23 and a third percent that is required to give to Israel. You don't get a choice in that. And if you think about what's going on here in the Temple Mount, well what's this all about?

OK, well we've moved the marker all the way up to the time of Christ. Well, what's happened? Well, Israel is not an autonomous nation anymore. They got the heavy hand of Rome over the top of them and now Rome is taxing them, so let's add a few more things, just so you can feel the economic squeeze of the first century as you prepare to pay your taxes this year. Are you ready?

The Romans required another 1%. I know they didn't live in Rome, they were way out there in what some would call Palestine in the Land of Israel. But you had to now pay these Roman governors and people like Herod who were these kind of client kings, if you will, of Rome and you had to underwrite them and so you had to pay 1% of your income to them, which sounds like a break, although now you're up to 24 and a third percent of your income.

Well, then they had a lot of other things. And you know Jesus converted some tax collectors, they were from Israel, Matthew was one of them. His old name was Levi. He was a tax collector. You had people like Zacchaeus who we saw converted in Luke. He was a tax collector. When the preaching turns to the tax collectors from John the Baptist, they came to be baptized and they were repenting of their sins, he says to them, very specifically, when they said what kind of new life should we be living, he said, "Don't exact any or collect any taxes more than you're authorized to do." Well the reason they hated the tax collectors is because they were always skimming off the top. So they may have required 1% but they always wanted you to pad their palm. They wanted more than that and they were in a position of authority because they didn't have any kind of Excel spreadsheet and accountability, they just weren't able to control that, and so part of their pay was to get what you could out of the people as you tax them. And if you really study Greco-Roman history you'll find there's a lot more than that. You had toll bridges on the roads that Rome had built, you had import levies, export taxes, you had property taxes, you had sales taxes in the marketplace. See, you're not feeling like you got it so bad now. Right?

Well we do, we're in California, it's worse than anywhere else it seems, but the taxes in the first century looked a lot like we have now. Crop taxes, customs, I mean, it was a lot that you had to pay at the tip of a Roman spear or at the enforcement of the leaders and elders and scribes and Pharisees of Israel. So who knows, somewhere between 30%, 40%, sometimes, depending on where you lived under the Roman hand, could be 50% of your income. So that was a lot of money going to compulsory giving.

Now the Romans called it taxes, they called it customs. I should add one more as long as you Bible students go through the Bible, you'll find the temple tax. Remember Jesus had a little encounter with them wanting him to pay the temple tax. Herod had put so much money into restoring Zerubbabel's temple from the fourth century B.C., that he had put all this gold and just rebuilt everything on the Temple Mount, it was so glorious. We're going to talk about the way the Apostles even were saying, "Wow, look at the amazing temple that Herod built." They had a two drachma tax for that. The drachma was the Hellenized way to talk about one day's wage of a common



worker. Let's just update it to a \$100. So, you had a two drachma tax every year for the temple, just to kind of pay off the bond, if you will, for remodeling the temple. That's \$200 extra out of your pocket. That was not a percentage, you just had to pay the temple tax.

Wow. It doesn't sound like putting money in the offering box. It's not. It's not what we're talking about here. What's going on in this passage in verse 1 where Jesus looks up, sees the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and saw a widow putting into two small copper coins, we get, clearly, not only historically, if we know the context historically, but the word "gifts," we know this has nothing to do with compulsory giving. This is voluntary giving. And on top of all the necessary compulsory giving, there was voluntary giving. And if you look in the Bible you'll find all kinds of offerings that were just there if you wanted to give them. Well, who'd want to give them after all that tax? Well, people who had some kind of love and devotion to God.

A lot of people made deals with God, they said God, I would like this or do this for me or give me a child or whatever and I'll do this. There were all these deals, they were called vows, and then there were free will offerings. If you just were having a good week, you want to come and bring a gift to the Temple Mount, you bring a free will offering. And there's one more thing that is particularly pertinent in this passage. If you know that we celebrate Easter in the spring, we follow the lunar calendar, which follows the Jewish calendar. We try to time this as we do, we don't try, we've got it down now, with the Jewish holiday of Passover. The Old Testament phrase for that is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If you understand the Bible, this is one of three major festivals where, if you lived in Israel, you had to make a pilgrimage, you had to travel to Jerusalem, to celebrate it. When you travel to Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread or the Feast of Weeks Pentecost or the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Tabernacles, there were three of them a year, all spread out in the calendar, the Bible says this.

Let me read it for you from Exodus Chapter 23. When you come to the festival, which this is the week, Jesus is going to die on Friday, he's here on Wednesday or Tuesday when he's on the Temple Mount, he's seen people come and putting money in the offering boxes. Why is that happening? Because here's what the Bible says, "In the appointed time, in the month of Abib," which later was, in the Old Testament, you saw in the Babylonian influence and the Persian influence, it was called Nissan. Anyway, it changed the name of the month, but it's in the spring, in the March-April timeframe. "In it you came out of Egypt," because it's all dated with the exodus out of Egypt, he says, you shall come before me for this celebration and "none of you shall appear before me empty-handed." That's an idiom to talk about the fact that everyone's supposed to bring a gift. Doesn't say how much. There's no percentage, there's no, you know, this many day's wage, it has nothing do with percentages, just come and give. Not just because you're coming to worship me, you had a great week, not because you made a vow, not because this is a free will, general offering, a peace offering or fellowship offering or wave offering. No. This is just because it's a feast, it's a festival.

So part of it is, you're going to sing, you're going to dance, they had a week of all kinds of things that they went on to celebrate the goodness of God, of taking their ancestors out of Egypt, but you are to bring a gift. So we start this with an offering. So you know there are a lot of people flooding into Jerusalem for this pilgrimage, this week. He's going to die on the Passover and what you have now is people putting their offering in the offering box. Historians tell us we get this from the Mishnah Babylonian Talmud. They had at the time of Christ, boxes, 13 of them, around the perimeter of the court, not the inner court but the court that, as far as the Gentiles could come up to, right at the perimeter, they had 13 boxes all marked with the 13 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and they had on them a "shofar." Remember what the shofar is? If you've got some Jewish friends, talk



about the blowing of the shofar. It's a ram's horn. It was called, the word that we translate in the New Testament, a trumpet, and the trumpet was attached to a box. It was affixed to a box and in the box, it collected the money, so out of it, you picture this kind of like an Edison phonograph or something, it had this big tube coming out of it, which was a shofar. And that was not just a super cool way to, like at the mall, see your pennies go down. No, it was so that you couldn't reach in and steal it. To be honest that's why it was there.

You put money into this funnel and the funnel went into the box so that you couldn't stick your hand in there and get anything out. So a little safety security feature. That's called the trumpet box or the shofar box. It was the offering box in the first century on the Temple Mount and it was there because when you come for pilgrimage you put something in the box. How much? Whatever you want. So, in this passage no one's being narced for the amount, at least not, they can't be narced for the amount. Why? Because there was nothing in the Scripture that told you how much you're supposed to bring. It's supposed to be a voluntary gift of whatever you want. OK. That's what's going on in the first century.

The temple veil cuts in two. God rips it, tears it. He now sets up a whole new system in the New Testament that doesn't live under the laws of the Old Testament, not the ceremonial laws at least, so all the priesthood, all the sacrifices, all the grain offerings, all that's gone. Well, what about giving? Well, the church was not a nation that lived among nations that had to support a government. There were no Levites anymore, so I guess we're out all the tithing. Right? Well in a sense, yes, because we are no longer under that administrative oversight of either a theocracy, without a king, or a monarchy, with a king. But here is what the Bible says, we as a church are an international organization who happened to be living on various places on the globe, like in Rome proper. And when Paul wrote the Romans, he wrote this, why you're in Rome, remember this. When it comes to oversight, leaders, people that adjudicate, judges, municipal leaders, all of that is going to be paid for by the government that you happen to live under. And therefore, he says in Romans Chapter 13, "pay taxes to whomever taxes are due, pay revenue to whomever revenues are due." He could have listed polls and customs and property taxes, whatever is due from your government, pay it. Then he even gets into matters of the heart and "respect to whomever respect is due, honor to whomever has that honorable title," you give them proper respect. That is the government. You don't live under the government of Israel anymore. We don't have a theocracy. We don't have a monarchy. You now are an international organization, so pay your taxes. So, if you want to slide something from the Old Testament to the New Testament, you have to look at compulsory giving, tithing, and say the government now has got its hand in my pocket and the IRS is pretty good at making it compulsory. They're going to take their taxes out of my pocket. And so there is a parallel there.

But wait a minute. What about all those free will offerings? Well I'm glad you asked, because there's a parallel in the New Testament. But it's interesting, there are two kinds of freewill offerings. There's a free will offering that you can or cannot make. It's up to you. Go back to when they started building the tabernacle, when God told Moses go out and build this tabernacle, this place of worship, it's a special project. He said go to the people and tell them there's going to be a contribution, and I'm quoting now from Exodus 25 verse 2, he says, "You say to them from everyone whose heart moves him to contribute, receive from him a contribution." So there was an optional kind of giving. That's a free will offering, much like the offerings that we see spelled out in Leviticus, were you could choose to do it or not to do it. Not going to get into trouble for not doing it, but if you're move to do it, you want to do it, give. But then there was the required giving that had no amount. Like when you went to the Feast of Unleavened bread, to Passover, like these people putting money in the box. If you want to do it or you don't want to do it, doesn't matter. You



have to do it.

Now how much? Whatever you want. That's why the amounts here aren't specified. So in the New Testament, what's the parallel with that? Well, your spiritual center, which is your church, the church has setup for you to participate in, you're going to seek God, know God, connect with Jesus Christ, you're supposed to connect with the church and at that church, here's the parallel, the Bible says you are to give to that church. Matter of fact, it is required.

Here's how the Bible puts it when Paul speaks to the Corinthians about giving, he says, "I was a missionary, I went to places, I had every right to receive an offering from you guys, but I chose not to as a missionary. I was planting churches, preaching the Gospel to non-Christians." But he's chiding those Corinthians for some of them taking that pattern and trying to apply it to their church. And he says don't do that. And he quotes the Old Testament because the Old Testament principles are all still in vogue, and he says, "Think about God when he said 'Don't muzzle the ox while he's threshing,'" making comparison to a big fat ox to your pastor. I don't appreciate that, but there it is.

And he asks, "Does God care about oxen?" And this is not... Hey, animal lovers, it's not that he doesn't care about oxen. Did God have prophets spill ink so that, you know, oxen could get fed while they're treading out the grain? No. He says not for oxen that he wrote this, it's for us. And he's saying in a New Testament context, after the temple veil has been ripped, in a new covenant context, listen, the principle of you paying your leaders is required. He says, if they sow in your life spiritual things, then it is appropriate, it's right, with the mandate of the Old Testament principles, you are to give materially to them. So at a church, you are to give. It is much like this text says, "You shall not come before the Lord empty handed." What does that mean? You have to give. How much does the Bible say you have to give? Now, everyone rushes because they find the word tithe in the Old Testament and they say a 10th. The Bible doesn't say that. You just have to give something. You have to decide what you're going to give. But everyone is required to give.

So it's a free will offering in the sense that you determine the amount. But it is not a free choice to make this offering. You have to make the offering, the Bible says, and you will make a determination in your own heart as to what you will give.

Now beyond that, there are other free will offerings that are completely voluntary in the New Testament. I'll give you some examples. The Apostle Paul speaks of himself as a missionary and he says he wasn't charging the people that he went to set these churches up in these lands. Many of them in Macedonia, many of them in Galicia and Asia Minor, in modern day Turkey, he's going around planting these churches. And he says this to the Philippians, he said, "When I was on one of these trips," he says, "no one participated with me, partnered with me in this, except for you guys." Right? He's speaking of the fact that there were a lot of people who chose not to support him as a missionary. He thanks them for that, although he says, you know what, "it really doesn't matter. God would provide one way or another. I know the secret of contentment of having little or having much. So, the reality of it, I'm not begging you guys." This was not a fund-raising letter. He was just saying, "you guys chose to support me," and he's grateful for that, and he says, "Thank you." So we know there's a kind of project you can or cannot give to. If I say, "Hey, we're going to plant another Compass Bible Church," and I say, "We're gonna take a special offering for that." Right?

The leaders, just like the leaders in Corinth, would ask them to give, not for the mandatory giving of the functioning of the worship center, but this project. You'd have every right, according to the principle of Scripture, to give or not give, that is your choice.

Special projects like this, when Paul writes so much about giving in Second Corinthians Chapters 8 and 9, he's talking about a special project. Now, a lot of preachers go to that passage to find what we should know about giving, and I guess there are lots of good principles that apply to all kinds of giving, but in that particular case, there was a famine in Jerusalem and all those Christians in Jerusalem are suffering. They couldn't eat, they didn't have enough food. And he says to the Corinthians, "I'd like you, I'm going to send Titus, we're going to take a collection, you set some money aside, and if you would like to, and I hope that you would, I hope you love the Christians in Jerusalem...." I mean, he does push pretty hard on them, but it's totally voluntary. And he says, you should be motivated by the Macedonian churches, which some you know. Philippi is one of those, Berea, Thessalonica, those churches which you'd recognize from the New Testament, those Macedonian churches, "they begged me, eagerly, for the participation in this offering. They wanted to be a part of this." He said, "Not because they had to, not under compulsion, not because I was saying you have to give." Matter of fact, Paul is really confessing, if you read between the lines, "I didn't really pressure them because they didn't have a lot of money, but they gave. Not just according to their means, they gave beyond their means."

And he says, "You Corinthians..." which was the Orange County, by the way, of the ancient world, look at what these poor guys did out in Blythe. Right? I'm sorry... That's right. I should leave Blythe alone. Probably some really rich people in Blythe. I'm going to end up there some day, I've told you that against my will. Right? I will be there... Sorry. And we're on the radio in Blythe too. Every time I make a Blythe joke off the cuff, I have to tell our radio guys, "Edit that out. I don't want my friends in Blythe to hear that." I'm sorry.

All I'm saying is, hey, Orange Countians... Right? Paul was saying to the Corinthians, "Look at what these guys out there, who don't have a lot of money, were giving so generously to this project in Jerusalem, which was we got a lot of churches that are struggling. I mean, when I got up here on a Sunday and I said these churches in Houston were flooded and I gave you two churches, I connected with them, they had a great need and I said, "Let's work..." And you guys gave to that. Now here's the thing, if you were to stand before God and say, "Well, I didn't give to that," he wasn't going to go, "You're in sin." Why? Because there's no requirement for you to give for those things. Your pastors can stand up and say here's a special project, would you like to give to that? Great. You can choose to give or not to give and how much to give is completely up to you.

So the New Testament has parallels to freewill offerings that are completely voluntary. Your choice to give or not to give. There's plenty of others, but those are two major ones, missionaries and special projects. But when it comes to weekly giving, which doesn't have to be weekly, but as God prospers you, that's the principle as you see, whenever you get paid, you have an obligation to give to your worship center and that is, the Bible says, a requirement. The amount is not designated in Scripture.

Now, I've got to, at least in this particular story, address some interpretations of this passage I think are unacceptable and do not fit the biblical text, the data from the biblical text. One of them is this, how are we to understand the story of this gal, who puts money in this offering box through the shofar, through the ram's horn? Some people will say, because we've just come off of Jesus castigating, if you will, the scribes for, remember the line we studied last week, who are "devouring widow's houses." Some people will say, well this passage is here because here's an example of those legalistic, sinful, corrupted leaders bilking the poor out of their money, and here's a widow right here. And so they would read this passage and say, this is a bad example of a bad system of a gal

giving to a corrupt system, and some would go so far as to say, it's not even just that she was duped, she's probably some works-righteousness person trying to give money so she can get to heaven and they completely pass this off as a bad example.

Well that's a minority view but it's growing in popularity it seems these days. So I just want to say there's no room for that in my mind. I, as a scholar of the Bible, as a student of the Bible, I'm looking at that going it doesn't fit the data. Let me give you some examples. Mark Chapter 1 verse 44, Jesus heals the man who had leprosy. When he's done he says this, I'll just quote it for you, "Go show yourself to the priest." I mean, we're just a matter of a couple years away from when he's going to get crucified by these people. The same priest, wearing the same name badge, in the same offices, at the same level of corruption. I guess you got 24 to 30 months of corruptions you can do, but these are the same people. "Go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing, what Moses has commanded." So, bring the offering that is commanded under the Law of Moses. So, any time Jesus, before the tearing of the temple curtain, any time there was a need, either to the pilgrimage, even as a kid in the family he would go up to Jerusalem to bring the sacrifices, his parents did it when he came to be circumcised and dedicated and the offering of dedication was given, any time he's in a situation where the Law of Moses requires something, he not only does it but he tells other people to do it.

That very day, if you were here with us last time, we looked at the short version of Jesus going after the scribes. I said the parallel passage of that in the same time chronology is over in Matthew 23, and that's the extended version. Here's how that passage starts. It says this, verse 2, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses." That means they sit in a literal seat, which is next to the lectern, where they would stand up, open the scroll and read from the Law of Moses and they would comment on it. He says, therefore, because they have that teaching post in the synagogues, "Do and observe what they tell you." Do and observe what they tell you. "But just don't do the works that they do, because they don't practice what they preach." They're hypocrites. Behind the scenes, they're robbing, they're cheating, they're stealing, they're committing adultery. Don't live like them, they're hypocrites. But you'd better do what they say. So, on this very day that Jesus is watching the gifts, he's telling the people in that same day, he hadn't even slept since he said that, he's telling them do what the Law of Moses says. And as the teachers get up and read from the Law do it.

Let me read from the Law for you about the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Deuteronomy Chapter 16 verse 16, "Three times a year your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place I will choose:" which is Jerusalem now, "at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Booths," are the three pilgrimage feasts. "They shall not appear before me empty handed." There it is, just like we saw in Exodus. Verse 17. Here's the key. "Every person shall give as he is able according to the blessing that the Lord your God has given to you." Therefore, I've got to bring a gift.

If a gal came to the Temple Mount on the Feast of Unleavened Bread and she didn't put something in there, we'd have a problem. Everyone was supposed to bring a gift. She did what she was supposed to do. The thing is, it's completely up to you how much to give. The amazing thing is, matter of fact, if you're her adviser or maybe her brother or cousin, you're going to say, "Don't be stupid." Right? "That's ridiculous. You only had two coins in your purse and you gave them both?" It's an extravagant example of free will giving. Not that you could choose to exempt yourself, but that you went so far as to give so much. So I need to understand this, as I think 95% of Christendom has understood this throughout the ages, as the reason Jesus gives this as an example is because this woman is being so extravagant.



Now to say that, number two on your outline, I'm not telling you I know her motive. I don't know her motive and someone can say, "Well, she's just a crass legalist." Yeah, it could be. I mean it could be she's trying to steal out of the box too, for all I know. I don't know. I don't know what her motive is. She could be insane. I don't know. All I know is she's doing something that in the Old Testament I see done by people who, when they give a reason, they give a pretty godly reason.

In other words, let's just assume that I say this. I don't know what her motive is, but let's just assume, her extravagant giving is like this extravagant giving we've seen, not only in the Old Testament, but even in the day of Christ when the woman took that expensive jar of very precious ointment and poured it on Christ and people said, "Oh, it was too extravagant." And Jesus doesn't say, "Yeah you're right. Let's be practical." He says, "Yes." Matter of fact, he told Peter, "Who loves more in the case of people doing extravagant things?" People who recognize how much they've been forgiven, that's the principle in the passage. So we recognize this, that some people give extravagantly into a place of insanity, it seems, just like he praised the Macedonian churches of Philippi and Berea for giving beyond their means. They do it because, as he said, they give themselves first to the Lord. They are just so enamored with the Lord.

Let's just imagine, if we would, and again, I'm just guessing. Let's imagine this woman gave like those people because she saw that the God that she trusted in and loved was great. Let's just understand that maybe because she's so impressed with the Word of God, which tells her to give, she respects it and fears it, and she respects and loves the God who's working in her life, although she has had some terrible things happen to her. She's looking at the words and the works of God and she's saying, "I want to give, and I don't want to give a minimum, and I just don't want to get by giving something. Matter of fact, I want to give all that I've got in my purse."

Number two on you outline, I think that is a principle we can start now to apply. Enough background, let's get to the application. You and I, I think, would do much better if we could "Envision the King When We Give." And of course the King of Kings, who sits enthroned in heaven, but also the King who sits at his right hand, and we saw this in Psalm 110, as we saw in the context. "The Lord said to my lord, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." So I've got the Son of God and I've got God the Father and I should see the King. As a matter of fact, I might as well recognize the triune God, the Spirit of God, the majestic Spirit of God. I need to come and give, when I give, because I see the greatness of God. That will change everything about how you give and maybe even get you to give a little bit like this woman did, which I'm trusting and guessing, I suppose I've got to say, I'm presuming, she gave like some people I've seen in the Old Testament.

As a matter of fact, let me give you a Psalm. I don't mean to put words in her mouth, but let's put these words in her mouth. OK? Psalm 56. Let me just quote for you four verses starting in verse 10, Psalm 56:10. Here's what the Psalmist says, "In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid," I won't be afraid "what people can do to me." Let's just think of that right there.

Let's just imagine this woman, who loves God so much, she trusts in his word, she trusts in his promise of sustenance, she trust in the fact that God will care for her, and she says, "I'm not going to be afraid because I know my friends would say, 'Don't spend the last two mites, if you will, the leptons, the two copper coins. Don't spend those, you need those.'" You'd say that. She can't even drive through Del Taco on the way home. She's got nothing. In her purse, she's got two copper

coins, which by the way, I guess if you read some commentaries it'll say it's like a 1/32 of a cent. You can start thinking that way and gets absurd. You're not carrying around that. It is the smallest denomination. If you want to update it, it is 1/100 of a drachma, and if you think of it that way and if we update it to modern day terms of the average worker, you know, unskilled whatever, not a master's degree, make it \$100 a day, let's say, 1/100 is \$1. So, she's got two of those coins, let's just put it that way. That may help us. She's got \$2. You've got a lot of people with a lot of money. they're coming up putting big gifts in there, she's got two mites, \$2. She opens her purse, that's all she's got, she puts it in. Let's just say she's saying, "God I trust you, I trust you. You're great. I'm not going to be afraid." Verse 12 says, "I must perform my vows to you."

Maybe there was something in her mind saying, "I want to give to you. If you just do this, if you just take care of me, if you just get me through this problem, I've struggled with the loss of my husband. I'm going to bring you this and it's some kind of deal I made," which are what vows were all about. Or, how about this, the next phrase, "And I render thank offerings to you." I'm just thankful. Why? Verse 13, "For you've delivered my soul from death." Now, I don't know what took her husband's life. Right? I don't know if she's old or she's elderly and her husband just died. If that's the case, why are you poor, you probably have some children, are they not taking care of you? I don't know what went on with her, maybe she's a young widow. Either way, she recognizes, having stared death in the face up close with her husband's burial, I mean, she recognizes, "Yes, you've delivered me, least I'm still alive. My feet have been kept from falling. I'm still here, I'm vibrant, I'm walking," as it says, "I walk before God in the light of life." Here she's walking into a very majestic building representing the God we trust, who she trusts in. And she says, "I trust you, I trust your words, I respect your word, I respect your works," and stuck right in the middle of all of that is, "I'm going to give to you."

If she really understood something about the King, in this case, the Father, Yahweh, the great King of the Old Testament, she would say, "I think in extravagance, I want to say thank you to you," and that is often connected in the Old Testament. All I have to do is go to the New Testament and see that the first gift Jesus ever got was from a bunch of Persian professors, who came with gifts after traveling across the desert to bring to a baby Jesus, who according to the context, had to be under 2-years-old at this point, living in a house, not in the manger, at this point he's a little toddler, perhaps, and they come and bring him these gifts of what? Do you remember? Three things, we talk about it at Christmas, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold is the currency of the day. They're bringing him money. Now if you're a fellow professor at the University of Iraq, let's say, and you've just had your visiting professors come back after a long journey. They left with a lot of gold and now they have very little because they gave a bunch of it to a little baby in Jerusalem, you're going to say, "That's ridiculous. Why did you do that?" This is not an indigent case, although I'm sure Joseph and Mary could use the money, this was an act of worship. Listen to the context, Matthew Chapter 2 verse 11. "They went to the house, they saw the child, they fell down and worshiped him. And then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." Gifts to the King, as Isaiah says, those are the gifts you give to Kings. And they recognized that, that's what they called him, the King, King of the Jews.

Now if those pagans, I say pagan because I don't think these people were worshippers of Yahweh. I do think they were impressed with Daniel, who had been there four centuries before, who kept talking about a coming Messiah, the Anointed One in Daniel 9, he would come. Matter of fact, given the time, 70 sets of seven, after 69 sets of seven, 480 years, you would have the coming of the Anointed One, the Messiah. I think they knew the timeframe because Daniel prophesied where these Persian magi came from. Not to mention two chapters earlier, they said this one who will



come from the Ancient of Days will be the one like the Son of Man who will have all authority, all dominion, all the power, "all people shall serve him." I think they realized Daniel was a pretty impressive figure in their history, now they're saying here's the King, let's give him kingly gifts. They didn't see it as a waste, they didn't write a check and put in the coffin, they put very valuable treasures before Christ.

Let me just take a quick sidebar here because some of you skeptics are going, "Let's just be real Pastor Mike, this isn't going to God." And I guess I'm going to say, well, I guess you're right. God doesn't have a bank account, he's not pulling money out going, "Oh, fantastic, I finally get a new car, those Christians are giving..." I mean, God doesn't use your money. "Yeah. You want to use our money. You want a raise, don't you? You want a bigger car or something like that." Yeah, I understand. If you were to give to God the way I've told you the Bible says in the New Testament you should give, which is required of you to give to your church. If you were to say, "Wow, I'm going to see the King in that," it's really just I'm putting up a cardboard cut-out and I'm really just saying, "give to me, give to our church, give to our leaders, give to our budgets."

Turn to one passage with me, turn to Second Chronicles Chapter 31. I'm not going to make any pretense here that every dollar you give goes into the church budget. That's exactly what happens, there's no doubt about that. But I want to show you that that is, in the Bible, the Bible says you can have that kingly vision of God being the recipient, knowing the intermediate recipient is the spiritual center and the leaders who you worship under. That's exactly what the Bible says. Starting with the Levites. Now, if you know your Bible well, Second Chronicles 31, it depicts historically the revival of King Hezekiah, who uncovers the Law, they start reading the Bible again and they realize they weren't doing a lot of stuff they should do and so they start getting serious about doing what the Bible says, including giving, verse 4. Let's look at it.

Second Chronicles 31 verse 4. "And he," that's King Hezekiah, "commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem," are you with me on this, Second Chronicles 31:4, "to give the portion," here's a pretty strong economic word, "due the priest," you owe this, "and to the Levites." Right? So the priests were a subset within the Levites and what were supposed to give a 10th of what we had to them, "that they might give themselves," now, themselves, look at that pronoun, got to go back to the antecedent, the "them" are the priest and the Levites, "that they might give themselves to the Law of the Lord."

Stop right there. Hezekiah, as we are about to see, this is all something I'm giving to God. And giving it as God's Word says, that I have great respect for God's word and his works in our lives and in our community. I'm going to give to God because he's been good to us, this is an act of worship. But we're giving it and that money is going to the pockets of the Levites and the priests and into the temple, into the budget, not of their personal budget, but the budget of their church, if you will, their worship center. So that, here is the reason, "they can give themselves to the Law of the Lord." That is the whole structure of the Levites and the priests. If that rings familiar in the New Testament, that's Acts Chapter 6, when there was a lot of things to be done but the whole point of relieving those people from it was so that those leaders could give themselves to the Word of God and to prayer.

Here's what you want. Here's what you want. I assure you it's a reciprocal win-win. You want to go to a church where the leaders of that church aren't having to be firemen on the side and not having to be accountants or architects on the side. You want a professional clergy, if you will, to use words I know you don't like to hear together. But you want that because what you want is you want me



and the rest of our pastoral team and all our ministry leaders to give ourselves fully to this work because, guess what, when that happens, that's a win-win. It's a win for us because, guess what, I can be a full-time leader, a spiritual leader, who's giving myself to the Law of the Lord or, New Testament, to the Word of God and to prayer. So that might provide you the kind of sustenance in your life spiritually and provide a place for you to worship and to grow and to have your family educated in God's truth. That's going to be far better than if I had to be bi-vocational. That's a way better thing.

You want me to wrestle with the text and the Scripture and the problems and the issues and even sit there and figure out the culture of our day, so that I can come and help you, and everyone who works on our team can help you and your family know God better and thrive spiritually. That's what you want. So, while you give to God, I understand, it all goes into the church, but keep reading. "As soon as the command was spread abroad," verse 5, "the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruit of grain, the wine, the oil, the honey, and all the produce of the field." They said, let's make sure we give a portion of all that's required. "And they brought it in abundantly, the tithe of everything." Now you could check the box of "tithe" if you just worried about your produce or the field, they just went down, "Oh, honey, wine, goes through the cupboards. Let's give 10% of everything we have."

"And the people of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of the dedicated things, things that were set aside for God that have been dedicated to the Lord their God, and they laid it in," here's a word for the church budget, "in heaps," piles of it.

Verse 7, "In the third month they begin to pile up the heaps," we don't know where to put it all, "and they finished them in the seventh months." Five months to pile these heaps up of all this produce, all the economic, you know, currency of the day. Verse 8, "When Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps," I love that word, "the heaps, they blessed the Lord and his people Israel. And Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps." Man, look at the budget here. "Azariah, the chief priest, who was of the house of Zadok," there's the senior pastor, if you will, "he answered, 'Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the Lord, we've eaten,'" we're getting fat, "'we've had enough and we have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed his people, so that we have this large amount left.' Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare the chambers." Well, then we need bigger bank accounts. Let's get the chambers built, let's get the storehouses built, "prepare the chambers of the House of the Lord and they prepared them. And they faithfully brought in the contributions, the tithes, and the dedicated things."

Now here's what you got. You've got a fat budget at the church, so to speak, for a bunch of people who the reciprocal nature of that is, "look at how God is blessing the people." Now in that, clearly, financially, they're being blessed, but hopefully they're being spiritually blessed, the leaders are being blessed, the church is thriving.

If we view the King when we give, I understand, skeptic, that that's going into some very physical pots, they end up paying a lot of physical things, like, we're not here with flashlights, we got light bills, we got screens, we got comfortable chairs, because we got money to do that. But the more you view the King in that giving and you give the way it's described here, the more that budget increases. I just want you to think about that for a second. That kind of giving changes everything for your life. I mean, I don't want to say like in Ephesians, you know, a marriage situation, to love your church budget is to love yourself, but in a way that's true, is it not? Think about it.



Spending on pets is up 25% in the last five years. Pets. The average dog owner in America spends \$1,641 per dog in their house. \$1,600. The average Christian today gives to their church per year, guess how much. You think it's going to be more or less than the dog. Pastor Mike, you would not be using this illustration if it were more. You're right.

I guess the question is how much less do you think it is? The average Christian in America, who says I'm Christian, submitted to the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, gives \$817 a year to their church, while they spend, if they own a dog, on average, \$1,641. If Christians would spend as much on their God as they spend on their dog, I just want to think here, just in terms of the equation, church budgets across America would double. Double. Well, then we'd need to pile up the money in heaps and build store houses. Right? Well, I guess in a sense we would. "Well, they don't need any more money than that, their cars look pretty decent and they're dressed pretty well." Listen, here's what it means. Think about it. If everything we did for the Lord, if we were going to plan a church and we're going to put some money into that, we're going to have an outreach, do a Fall Fest or an extravaganza, or go door to door, put materials together or for your kids, a memorable Good Friday event. Think about that. If Susan and her team say, we're going to put this program together, and I looked at her and said, "We got a heaps surrounding. Hey, Susan, double your budget." Oh, I know we got donkeys and, you know, bunnies and goats. You'd have giraffes and hippopotamuses. It would be unbelievable. I mean, your kids would never forget that. If I were going to say, hey, here's our plan and we're going to do whatever it might be. We're going to upgrade the whole experience here in the worship center or we're going to help a church in another place or we're going to do something to help this community or the needs in our church. If I said to everyone, double it, double double, double it. Do you know what kind of church experience you'd have?

I mean, just think about it. I mean, it would just be crazy to think about church budgets doubling. And the pathetic standard I started with is just if people would spend as much on God as they spend on their dog every year. Now I know that doesn't apply to all of you. Praise God. It doesn't describe all of you. Some of you give far more to the Lord than you do on your pets. That's fantastic. But here's the line in America on paying for your pets. It's up 25% in five years. And I read articles that would just make you want to throw up about how people are spending outrageous, \$600 a night for special doggie hotels. Right? I don't know when the last time I spent a night in a \$600 hotel. I need to go to the doggie motel in Garden Grove or whatever.

Listen, you just need to realize, I just think we just have a greater vision for some of the, as the Bible would say, and I don't want to insult your dog, but the worthless things of this world. I just did insult, right? I just want you to realize, I just think we need a higher view of God when we give. "Ah, the leverage, here it comes, this is all about the church budget." Listen, I'm a consecutive text preacher, we got to this passage, I'm just looking at this passage trying to understand it in context and know that it's just a time for us this week to take a look at ourselves and say, "How are we doing in terms of giving."

And I'm not here to say, here's what you should give. I'm here to say, do you give as though you're giving to the King. And when people give to the King and they really see it clearly, they give a whole lot differently than when they just check a box and say, "Oh yeah, I'm supposed to give because the Bible says I have to."

King David is a good example. When King David was in a situation, it's a long story to tell, but he's basically at a place where it's time for him to worship God. It's very important, it's crucial, it's

urgent, you know the story, some of you. He comes to the threshing floor of Araunah and ends up being the place where his son would end up building the Temple in Jerusalem. Threshing floors were always on high hills where you had the breeze coming in to separate the chaff from the wheat. Well, there was that place and here was Araunah, who owned that place and he had cattle there on it, and he knew David came and was looking for a place to sacrifice and build an altar to the Lord, and he said, "Here David, take it, you're the king, and he was the mighty king. And he walks up on the Temple Mount and he says this is the place and Araunah says, "Take it, take it, take it. Here's all the cattle, sacrifice to God." Do you know what he says? He says, "No. I will pay the full price." And Chronicles even, I think it's Chronicles, the Chronicles passage, that tells us how much it was.

He counts out the silver coins to him and then he says this, "Because I will not sacrifice to the Lord things that cost me nothing." See, I want you to think about that, because you go out this afternoon and sinfully play the lotto. Sorry, insulted your dog, and insulted you now. And you win it and, let's just say, you gave it all to the church, which I'm going to tell you, we're going to return it to you, by the way. That's a different sermon. I'm just going to tell you this: David would say, that's no gift. Right? You got it for free, you've given it to... "I won't sacrifice anything to the Lord that costs me nothing." That's Second Samuel, last chapter, but the chapter before he's telling the exploits of the mighty men of David. And here's the chapter before, some of you know this story too. And he says, just kind of breaks out in a... He's just famished. He says, "If I could just have some water from the spring," particularly the spring that he had drank water from when he wasn't in battle, and here he is the battle. And the men go behind enemy lines and they draw from the spring, they risk their lives, they come back with this flask of the water and he takes that water, thirsty. They did that because he said he was thirsty. And the Bible says... Do you know what it says? "He poured it out before the Lord." Now that sounds like putting gold in a tomb of a dead person. Why would you waste that water? Aren't you thirsty?

It's like looking at this woman going you got two bucks in your purse, save one at least and get the meal deal on the way home. What are you doing? And it's an extravagant heart like that, that sees the greatness of his God, in this case David, and he says, "I'm pouring it for the Lord as an offering to God." See the King, it'll change the way you give. And I guess what I'm saying is Jesus comments in verse 4, "they contributed out of their abundance," and there's nothing wrong with that. A matter of fact, they were required to give, Deuteronomy says it, Exodus says it, they were required to give and they gave. But he's saying if you want to compare the gift, I just want to tell you, this woman gave out of her poverty, she didn't have much left over. A matter of fact, in a sense, all she had to live on she put in there. He said that's extravagant, that's a real sacrifice.

I just want to say this, as Ray Summers said, an old scholar. Here's a picture of a woman giving her all and Jesus calling her out on giving her all just before he goes off on Friday to give his all. I don't think this is a bad example, as some commentators would say. This is an example of a woman extravagantly giving everything. When Paul starts to write the Corinthians about giving, he says, I want you to think about this: "Christ, who though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become...", and, of course, the context, the salvation and forgiveness, "rich."

The motivation we should have, number three on your outline, is to "Be Motivated by Real Sacrifice." And though you say, "Well, we don't know this woman's motive." Well, perhaps we don't but let's just assume it's good and even if her's is bad, I don't know, when I see guys like David pouring out good water that he's thirsty to drink. Or saying money he could keep and spend on himself but instead he says, "I'm paying the full price because I don't want to sacrifice anything that



doesn't cost me." Or Jesus, who says, "You know what, I'm going to give my all for the good of someone else, in this case to the glory of God." I need to recognize that, man, I haven't really sacrificed much in my life.

But it starts with this, as Jesus said in Luke 14, we studied it in verse 33, he says, "You can't be my disciple unless you're ready to step up and say, 'I am your offering.'" Isn't that how it starts? Romans Chapter 12, "I beseech you," I beg you, "by the mercies of God," in light of all that God has done to be merciful to you, I'm asking you to "present yourselves to God as a living..." What? That's the Old Testament word. Let's make a New Testament word out of that. There are no sacrifices, no animal sacrifices or offerings. Right? Oh, it's the word sacrifice, I get that, but that's so distant. "A living sacrifice." God says, "the offering I want first is you." That's the place to start. God will figure out how much he needs of whatever you've got to do whatever it is he moves your heart to do. But you've got to give yourself first to God.

And back to that great passage, so many principles there, in Second Corinthians 8 and 9. But he says, listen, the good thing Corinthians, Orange County Christians, about those Macedonians is they gave themselves first to the Lord. We saw they were living offerings and then they gave of themselves to the Jerusalem Christians who were suffering. The gifts that they gave were a subset of their own thinking about themselves. We offer ourselves to God. I know you've heard sermons about that. Right? We give to God just a token of what he's given us, everything that I have belongs to God, that's a great way to think, that's good, I could preach on that. But the idea here is, I just want to tell you, this woman had to see herself, if she had any good motives at all, and I think she does, that she's God's. As I said in that great Psalm, God is our sustenance, our help, our strength, our shield, our rock. We're living sacrifices.

Paul does talk about giving in Second Corinthians 8. He says, you know, you excel in a lot of things, you Orange County Corinthians, in faith, in speech and knowledge and earnestness. He says, I want to see to it that you excel on the grace of giving. It would be good for us to get motivated when we read about a poor gal who put in money. You'd want to put your arm around her and take her out to a great Ruth's Chris steak dinner, and you should, but don't take away from her the wonderful feeling of going to God and saying, "You're the King. I'm putting everything I have in as an expression of my thanksgiving and worship.

When our kids were little they, like a lot of your kids, were really into going to Chucky Cheese. I'm so glad that phase of my life is over. Didn't care for that. They loved Chucky Cheese, of course, they were kids. We lived right around the corner from it, actually, so they dug going there. Back in the day, they're phasing it out now, but they have all those tokens, you know, and they end up coming home with some of them, of course, because it was like we got to go, man, we'd closed the place out at night or whatever. So, we go home and in my kitchen I have, what I'm sure you guys have in your kitchen, I got it over there by the bulletin board, we used to have this antiquated thing called a phone that hung on the wall, but now it's gone. But there's this little jar with all the change in it. We'd come home, got some change in our pocket, we threw it in there, you got one of those probably. But what I kept finding is that every time I needed a quarter or needed some change, I'd go in there and I'd reach for quarter and I'd pull out a token with a rodent's face on it. Right? I mean, it just started to get just infiltrated with Chucky Cheese tokens. And I hated them. And by God's grace, my kids kept growing up and I stopped hearing all the squawking about going to Chucky Cheese and so we stopped going and, finally, one day I went there and picked out all the tokens and threw them out. I couldn't wait to get rid of the tokens.



And what's interesting is I got to see my kids, even as they grew, the younger they were and the more enamored they were with the glitz and gloss of all the lights and weird stuff that's going on in there, the more those tokens were like, you know, like Bitcoin and, you know, I've got to have them. Sorry. Not this week, Bitcoin a month ago. But, they were like the most precious thing on the planet. Tokens, tokens, tokens! But the older they got and, I mean, you're still going there and they got younger siblings or whatever, you start to see the relative unimportance of those tokens to them. Matter of fact, they would just cling on to those things as tightly as they could. The older they got, if someone needed some, I'd even see them giving away to people they don't know. Because, walk through those double glass doors, in the van, in the backyard, let's go. I've got things that are really more appealing to me than what's going on here with the glitz and flashes of all that's happening with skeeball or whatever. That's called maturity and, of course, now they find tokens, I suppose they are like me, "Throw them out, I don't want these tokens, I've want nothing to do with these anymore."

We studied a passage when Jesus was talking about money earlier in Luke, and he talked about our use of money. He says, because when it fails, and he said it indicatively, like it's going to fail. And I hate to make this analogy but it works. We live in this terrestrial Chuckie Cheese. Right?

We are part of a planet that runs on rodent tokens and those tokens, one day, we're going to walk through those double glass doors and none of those tokens are going to mean a stinking thing to you. They just won't matter. Oh, I understand now, they're useful and there's a counter and you can buy your little Tchotchkes and whatever, but it won't really matter if you die with a bunch of tokens in your pocket. What really matters is what you can do with them while you're here. And one of the things Jesus said is start building some bridges with people. Right? Now, that's a secondary kind of application we didn't even touch on this morning. Our application this morning is when God says, I want you to give, give whatever you want to give in your heart, but give. And we see someone extravagantly giving, we know that the relative unimportance of those tokens, if you will, that money in your life, was far less than her just expressing gratitude to God.

We're on the cusp of graduating from Chucky Cheese. How much you keep for yourself won't matter. Let's use all we've got to honor the King. Yeah, you've got to pay your mortgage and you've got to get a new car and you've got to clothe your kids, you've got college. Great, great. And I remember First Timothy Chapter 6, he's provided all things for us to enjoy. That's in the context of someone who's got money, I get that, it's great, buy a new couch. Enjoy it, go on vacation, great. But don't cling to those dollars because one day they'll mean nothing. Right now use it as an expression of your worship. Do it, use it to help those around you. Use it to build bridges, evangelistic bridges, so you can welcome people into eternal dwellings where your money won't really matter at that point. There will be a whole new currency there. Let's love God and be motivated by that kind of sacrifice we've seen here in Luke 21.

Let's pray. God, help us think rightly about our finances. I know we've been coming to church on a day when we're talking about money. A lot of people, they bristle at that and yet, God, what an important part of our lives, it's there every day, every week. And while this wasn't a sermon that was scheduled because we are looking at our budgets at our church, it does get kind of exciting to think of what we could do for good in this world representing and honoring the King with our facility, with our programs, with our missions, with our missionaries, with our church planting, just as you provide abundantly and we bring in the joyful offerings, pile them up in heaps. God, this isn't a prosperity gospel church, obviously. This is not about us getting rich, getting private jets, riding around in limos, it's about us, just as a church, pulling together to honor you, and as the Bible says



way back in Proverbs Chapter 3 to honor you with our wealth. So this practical message, drive it home to our hearts, at the place it ought to be. Let it motivate us, let it really be an expression of our love for you as we grow in our faith in Jesus name.

Amen.