

Title: ENCOUNTERING GENEROSITY

Text: Mark 12:38-44

Mark 12:38-44 (ESV)

And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

CONVERSATION STARTER

- Think about a person you know who has been extravagantly generous to someone else, whether they gave money, time, or energy. What do you think motivated them in that instance to be so generous?
- Read Mark 12:38-44. What is the predominant critique Jesus makes of the scribes? In what way did the woman put in more than the rest of the people Jesus observed? What positive characteristic is Jesus highlighting in the woman in this story?
- Read 1 Chronicles 29:9-19. This prayer of David is given as a commissioning to Solomon to build the temple. What characteristics of God does David highlight in this prayer? How does David perceive even his own possessions in light of these characteristics? According to David, what is God most pleased with as His people give to the temple's construction?
- Read the excerpt below. What are some ways in which you have found yourself bargaining with God? Do you agree with Lewis that these areas of bargaining are really "areas of death?" Why, according to Lewis, does God demand everything of those who follow Him?
- When is it easiest for you to use your religious activity to boost your own reputation? Why? Think about two or three areas of your life (job, reputation) that you struggle to surrender to God. Share one of these with the group and discuss ways you might grow in that area.

EXCERPT FROM: *The Weight of Glory*

BY: C. S. Lewis

For it is not so much of our time and so much of our attention that God demands; it is not even all our time and all our attention; it is ourselves. For each of us the Baptist's words are true: "He must increase and I must decrease." He will be infinitely merciful to our repeated failures; I know no promise that He will accept a deliberate compromise. For He has, in the last resort, nothing to give us but Himself; and He can give that only insofar as our self-affirming will retires and makes room for Him in our souls. Let us make up our minds to it; there will be nothing "of our own" left over to live on, no "ordinary" life. I do not mean that each of us will necessarily be called to be a martyr or even an ascetic. That's as may be. For some (nobody knows which) the Christian life will include much leisure, many occupations we naturally like. But these will be received from God's hands. In a perfect Christian they would be as much part of his "religion," his "service," as his hardest duties, and his feasts would be as Christian as his fasts. What cannot be admitted – what must exist only as an undefeated but daily resisted enemy – is the idea of something that is "our own," some area in which we are to be "out of school," on which God has no claim.

For He claims all, because He is love and must bless. He cannot bless us unless He has us. When we try to keep within us an area that is our own, we try to keep an area of death. Therefore, in love, He claims all. There's no bargaining with Him.