

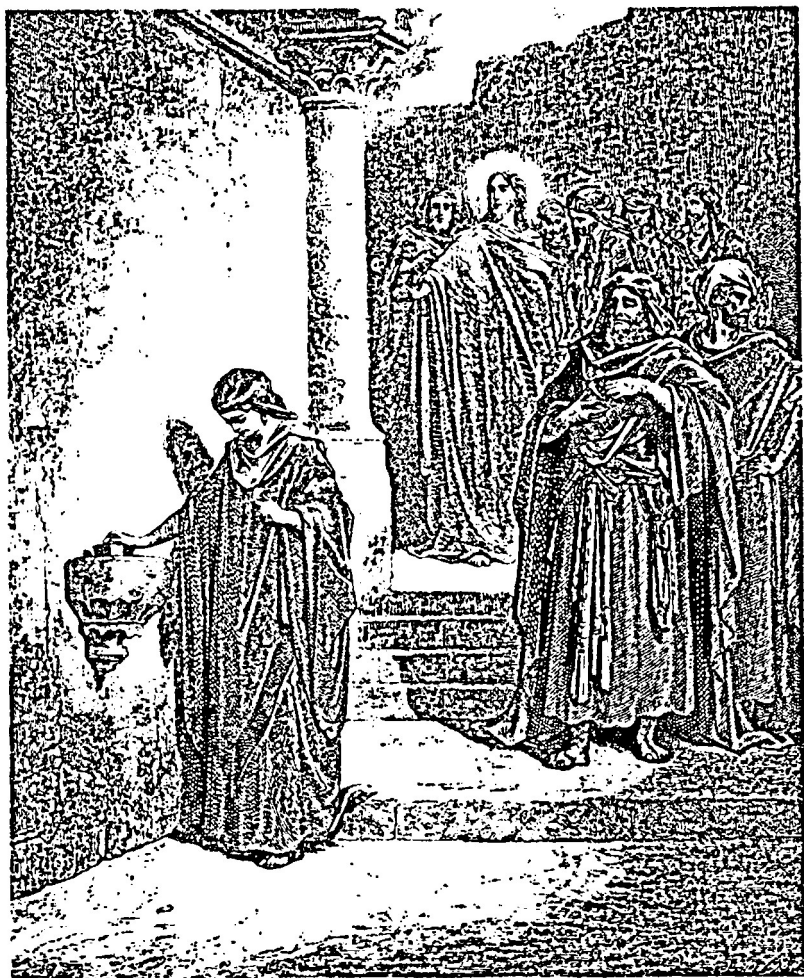
Reflections on Give God the Glory

READINGS

In the world money is the standard of value. It is difficult to express all that money means. It is the symbol of labor and enterprise and cleverness. It is often the token of God's blessing on diligent effort. It is the equivalent of all that it can procure of the service of mind or body, of property or comfort or luxury, of influence and power. No wonder that the world loves it, seeks it above everything, and often worships it. No wonder that it is the standard of value not only for material things, but also for man himself, and that a man is too often valued according to his money.

It is, however, not only thus in the kingdom of this world, but in the kingdom of heaven, too, that a man is judged by his money, and yet on a different principle. The world asks, *what* does a man own; Christ asks, *how* does he use it? The world thinks more about the money-getting; Christ, about the money-giving. And when a man gives, the world still asks, *what* does he give? Christ asks, *how* does he give? The world looks at the money and its amount; Christ, at the man and his motive.

You see this in the story of the poor widow. Many that were rich cast in *much*, but it was *out of their abundance*. There was



The Widow's Mite, by Gustave Dore. Illustration for the Dore Bible, 1865.

no real sacrifice in it; their life was as full and comfortable as ever—it cost them nothing. There was no special love or devotion to God in their giving, only part of an easy and traditional religion. The widow cast in a *farthing*. Out of her want she cast in all that she had, even all her living. She gave all to God without reserve, without holding back anything. She gave all.

How different our standard is from Christ's. We ask how much a man *gives*. Christ asks how much he *keeps*. We look at the gift. Christ asks whether the gift was a sacrifice. The widow kept nothing over—she gave all. And the gift won his heart and approval, for it was in the spirit of his own self-sacrifice, who, being rich, became poor for our own sakes. They, out of their abundance, cast in much; she, out of her want, all that she had.

— Andrew Murray, in *Money*¹

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When I give out of what I do not need
can I say I have given sacrificially
in my giving let there be
the depth of sacrifice welcomed by Thee

When I give to receive a promised reward
can I say I have given in a way that counts
in my giving let there be
desire only for approval from Thee

When I give that others may see
can I say my intentions are right
in my giving let there be
the purest of motives acceptable to Thee

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For twenty-five years I have urged and preached that the apostasy of the American church is that it never dealt openly and “up front” with the issue of *money*. In the last decade, while our sex lives have become an open book, “money” is still taboo in the church. Why? Because *the institutional Church* (not the gospel) didn’t know what to say when so many of its parishioners were rich and the gospel is clearly and unambiguously addressed to poor village folk.

From our floundering experience in a small, disciplined, dedicated community (house church) we have learned certain things by experience, others by observation. The most important of these is that a Christian must have a community, a small group of “significant others” (who share the faith) as her/his reference group—to set her/his behavioral norms or guidelines. Such guidelines are situational, not absolute, by definition. They are flexible, but they are the ropes which help us climb the rock face. We have dealt with the “guidelines” on sexual behavior in the book *Honest Sex*. Below we set down a summary of the analogous principles and guidelines on money.

- The cardinal principle of Christian behavior is “other-centredness,” with a stabilizing balance of a healthy concern for self in order to be more effective in serving others.
- Money (unlike sex) can be transferred, easily and across long distances, and also unlike sex need have no personal dimension.
- Money (as in the widow’s mite) is a potent tool for witness.

Our use of money should be in tune with these principles. Hence:

1. We should live markedly and noticeably *below* our income level whatever that be. (It does not mean total divestiture.) This has two benefits: it frees up money for giving (see below). It provides a continuing occasion for witness on the use of money.

eternal Christ Spirit, in quiet and reflective times, and in times of pain or trouble, excitement or happiness, inspiration or effort, temptation or anxiety. It is a great joy to know that every person may open his heart and mind to the indwelling Spirit that is with and within each of us. I thank you with my whole heart. Today, tomorrow, and always, let me respond with a joyful and generous spirit by giving gladly what I have to give . . .time, talent, money, possessions, hospitality, attention, encouragement, sympathy, laughter, smiles. . . . I have received so abundantly, let me deeply and truly rejoice in my opportunities to share.

Silence