

## Luke 21:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, <sup>2</sup>and He saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

<sup>3</sup>“Truly I tell you,” He said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. <sup>4</sup>For they all contributed out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

Berean Standard Bible

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1

### **Jesus is watching my wallet. Luke 21:1-4**

Jesus sees who gives. 21:1-2

Who should give.

Why I should give.

Jesus sees what is given. 21:2

What I should give.

When I should give.

Jesus sees the cost of giving. 21:3

Giving should be proportional.

Giving should be sacrificial.

Jesus sees the cost of living. 21:4

Giving is the heart of worship.

Giving blesses my own heart.

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2

### **Luke 21:1-4**

No one escapes Jesus' attention. 21:1-2

How do you define 'rich'? 1 "saw the rich"

How do you define 'poor'? 2 "saw a poor widow"

Nothing I do escapes Jesus' attention. 21:1-2

Jesus knows what is wise. 1 "putting their gifts"

Jesus knows what is worship. 2 "put in two small copper coins"

No insight escapes Jesus' attention. 21:3-4

Jesus knows what is surplus. 4 "contributed out of their surplus"

Jesus knows what is sacrifice. 4 “all she had to live on”

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3

**God is everywhere – even in your purse/wallet. Luke 21:1-4**

Jesus knows who is giving. 21:1-2

Jesus knows what you have. 1 “saw the rich”

Jesus knows what you lack. 2 “saw a poor widow”

Jesus knows how I give. 21:2-3

Jesus knows the amount I give. 2 “two small copper coins”

Jesus knows the proportion I give. 3 “put in more than all the others”

Jesus knows what is given. 21:4

Jesus knows the context of my giving. 4 “contributed out of their surplus”

Jesus knows the extent of my giving. 4 “out of her poverty has put in all”

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4

**Luke 21:1-4**

Jesus sees what the world sees. 21:1-2

Jesus sees how the world misreads success. 1 “saw the rich”

Jesus sees how the world misreads poverty. 2 “saw a poor widow”

Jesus sees more than the world sees. 21:2-3

I give with my hands. 2 “two small copper coins”

I give with my heart. 3 “put in more than all the others”

Jesus sees what the world does not see. 21:4

Jesus knows how I calculate. 4 “contributed out of their surplus”

Jesus knows how I sacrifice. 4 “out of her poverty has put in all”

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5

**Luke 21:1-4**

I give to God the amount I choose. 21:1-2

Minimum I choose. 1 “putting their gifts”

Maximum I choose. 2 “put in two small copper coins”

I give to God the proportion I choose. 21:3  
God sees my choices. 3 “more than all the others”

I give to myself the amount I keep. 21:4  
No condemnation for being rich. 4 “contributed out of their surplus”  
No congratulation for being poor. 4 “out of her poverty has put in all”

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6

### **Grappling with giving. Luke 21:1-4**

My giving is noticed. 21:1-2  
Jesus sees who is giving. 1-2 “Jesus looked up and saw... and He saw”  
Jesus sees what is given. 1-2 “putting their gifts... put in two small copper coins”

My giving is counted. 21:3  
Godly giving is proportional. 3 “this poor widow has put in more”  
Godly giving is measured. 3 “put in more than all the others”

My giving is valued. 21:4  
Godly giving is generous. 4 “contributed out of their surplus”  
Godly giving is sacrificial. 4 “put in all she had to live on”

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### **Other possible titles**

Tithes, Offerings, and Love Gifts  
How does God spend His money?  
How much money should I give to God?  
God owns everything. Why give anything?  
What gift would you give to a royal visitor?  
What do you give to someone who has everything?  
Who are the hardest people to shop for?  
Here is a way of testing your love for God.  
Greed, Gratitude, and Generosity  
It's not how much I give, but how I give  
Live beyond a Poverty Mentality  
Giving generates greatness  
Poverty has its purpose, and so too does wealth  
It is more blessed to give than to receive, so bless yourself  
Backhand blessings  
Talking about tithing  
High stakes

The world is not enough (James Bond movie)

True treasure

Let God look after your wallet/purse

I mite use this model

I mite give it all (thanks to Mike Fogerson)

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### **Quotes and illustrations**

You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. Deuteronomy 14:22

You shall give him the first fruits of your grain, your new wine, and your oil, and the first shearing of your sheep. Deuteronomy 18:4

‘Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s; it is holy to the Lord. Leviticus 27:30

King David understood personal sacrifice for God. In 2 Samuel 24, we see David purchasing a threshing floor where he would offer a sacrifice to God. When he went to the owner to ask him how much he wanted for it, the owner said that he would gladly give it to his king. David responded by saying, “No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” (2 Samuel 24:24)

Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops. Proverbs 3:9

One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. Proverbs 11:24-25

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done. Proverbs 19:17

The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor. Proverbs 22:9

The first of all first-fruits of every kind and every contribution of every kind, from all your contributions, shall be for the priests: you shall also give to the priest the first of your dough to cause a blessing to rest on your house. Ezekiel 44:30

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. Malachi 3:10

Tithing did not end when the Old Testament Law ended because tithing did not commence when the Old Testament Law commenced. Tithing was included in the Law, but has always been independent of the Law. That is why tithes were given by the patriarchs Abraham (Genesis 14:17-20) and Jacob (Genesis 28:22), before the Law.

Tithing is not prescribed in the New Testament but our money is a measure of our heart. Which is why Jesus, in Matthew 6:21, says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:3-4

Freely you have received; freely give. Matthew 10:8

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet lose or forfeit his very self? Luke 5:25

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Matthew 25:35-40

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:38

Jesus told him [the rich young ruler], "You still lack one thing: Sell everything you own and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." (Luke 18:22)

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:35

Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

[Regarding the Macedonian believers] In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. 2 Corinthians 8:2-5

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. 2 Corinthians 8:12

<sup>6</sup>Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup>Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not out of regret or compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to

make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:9-10

Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. Philippians 4:15-17

And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:10

Honour widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 1 Timothy 5:3-4

If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8

If any believing woman has dependent widows, she must assist them and not allow the church to be burdened, so that it can help the widows who are truly in need. 1 Timothy 5:16

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." 1 Timothy 5:17-18

The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. By craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. 1 Timothy 6:10

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? James 2:15-16

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 1 John 3:17

A giving Saviour ought to have giving disciples. (J C Ryle)

Get all you can, save all you can, give all you can. (John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church)

Years ago, the well-known preacher, John Broadus wanted to impress on his congregation the fact that Jesus knows what we give. So one Sunday he came down off the platform and walked beside an usher as the offering was taken.

The pastor went up every aisle and watched as each person either gave or passed the plate by. Some were angry; others were confused or ashamed. All were surprised.

He went back to the pulpit and began his sermon on this Scripture. He said, "My people, if you take it to heart that I have seen your offerings this day and know just what sacrifice you have made—and what sacrifice you have not made—remember that your Saviour goes up the aisles with every usher and sees every cent contributed by His people" ("Our Daily Bread," 5/77, with thanks to David Mende).

If you will, imagine for a moment that your child knew your birthday was coming and they wanted to give you a gift but didn't have money to buy you something. Imagine that they decide that the best thing they could do would be to give you something of theirs. When you open the gift, you find that they had gone into the basement to the boxes filled with their baby toys and pulled out a toy they had outgrown years ago. What your response be? On the one hand, the child showed some resourcefulness, but ultimately their gift was not much of a gift at all—and quite frankly, you wouldn't be impressed. You would recognize that they were simply trying to fulfill their duty of getting you a gift without really sacrificing anything.

Imagine the same scenario, but this time the child wraps up their most prized possession and gives it to you, saying, "I love this item a whole lot, but I love you even more and wanted to give you something special." Would this change the way you viewed the gift? Even if you didn't need it, your heart would melt at the sacrifice your child made to honour you.

We are going to look at a story just like that from Luke 21:1-4. In this account, Jesus drew attention to a woman who gave everything she had to the Lord and contrasted it with the gifts given by others that involved hardly any sacrifice; who gave large amounts but essentially gave their leftovers. (with thanks to Rick Goettsche)

Wealth is not a measure of Godliness. The one with the biggest heart for God had the smallest bank balance. IBD

Whatever you want for yourself, give it to another. If you give to another, then you're going to have that." Whatever we want for ourselves, if we give it to others then we will have that. (internet)

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## Commentary

### Prior to this incident

This was the day after Jesus had cleared the temple, declaring to the religious leaders, “It is written: ‘My house will be a house of prayer.’ But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’” (Luke 19:46) So, for two days in a row, Jesus addressed the topic of money in the temple.

### Following this incident

Immediately following Jesus’ observations on wealth and poverty, we read of the disciples’ observations of wealth and power, and Jesus’ response. <sup>5</sup>“As some of the disciples were remarking how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and consecrated gifts, Jesus said, <sup>6</sup>“As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” (Luke 21:5-6)

### Care for widows

If any believing woman has dependent widows, she must assist them and not allow the church to be burdened, so that it can help the widows who are truly in need. (1 Timothy 5:16)

Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:27)

### Complementary Scripture readings

Deuteronomy 8:6-20 (shorter, v11-18)

Proverbs 3:1-10 (shorter, v5-10)

Matthew 6:25-33 / Luke 12:22-34

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## Greek commentary

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus **looked up** and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury,

The verb ἀναβλέπω [Strongs 308] is a compound word. The prefix ἀνά [Strongs 303] is a preposition indicating ‘again, return, upward, renewal, repetition’. The second component is βλέπω [Strongs 991] is a verb meaning ‘be observant, be watchful, look carefully, look in order to see’. This word is used of one who looks and could be tempted, “everyone who **looks** at a woman” (Matthew 5:28); and of the Father who sees all things, “your Father who **sees** what is done in secret” (Matthew 6:4).

This verb ἀναβλέπω occurs 25 times in the Greek New Testament, only in the Gospels and Acts. It is used primarily in two ways. First, of the blind receiving their sight (Luke 7:22, 18:41, 42, 43). Second, of Jesus looking up Heavenward as He blessed food (Luke 9:16).

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus looked up and **saw** the rich putting their gifts into the treasury,

The verb ὁράω [Strong's 3708] means more than merely 'look at', it means 'see, perceive, discern, look into'. This word means to see with insight.

The fact that Jesus both "looked up" and "saw" indicates that He was watching what was happening at the treasury. He perceived with insight the different donors and the different amounts they contributed to the coffers. Further, He discerned the heart of the giver.

### Parallel texts

Mark 12:41-44	Luke 21:1-4
<p><sup>41</sup>As Jesus was sitting opposite the treasury, He watched the crowd putting money into it. And many rich people put in large amounts.</p> <p><sup>42</sup>Then one poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amounted to a small fraction of a denarius.</p> <p><sup>43</sup>Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more than all the others into the treasury.</p> <p><sup>44</sup>For they all contributed out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."</p>	<p><sup>1</sup>Then Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, <sup>2</sup>and He saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>"Truly I tell you," He said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>For they all contributed out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."</p>

### Music and songs

Songs about God's wealth / value, 1 "saw the rich"

Above all, TS 611

At the cross. My worth is not in what I own (Getty)

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, 12

Hear the call of the Kingdom

No eye has seen... How high and how wide, Ot 52  
Let the weak say... What the Lord has done in me, Ot 65  
Oh the mercy of God,  
Praise the Lord! His mercy is more

Songs about giving, 1 "their gifts into the treasury"  
All want their lives... to count for Jesus  
God forgave... Freely, freely, you have received, SiS 41  
The giving song, RC & the YP, p 31-42  
What can I give to the King?

Songs about sacrifice, 3 "put in more than all the others"  
I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold, Ot 105

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### **Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion**

1. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, taught: Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can. Do you agree with him?
2. Jesus told us to give to everyone who asks us (Luke 6:30). Should we give to every beggar; if so, what should we give; if not, why not? How does 2 Thessalonians 3:10 and 1 Timothy 5:3-4, 16 address our giving (and our welfare system)?
3. Compare Jesus' words in Luke 6:38 with the principle of tithing.
4. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. For you, what are the key lessons from each of these three verses; and from the passage as a whole?
5. In what ways does Galatians 6:9-10 determine to whom we give, and not give?
6. Jesus gave no commendation to the widow, and no condemnation of the rich. What do you deduce from that fact?
7. In the middle of a long section on giving we read 2 Corinthians 8:9. Why is this an appropriate centrepiece?