

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

June 2, 2024

The Widow's Mite

Mark 12:41-44

Prayer: *Father, I do praise you and thank you for this day. I thank you for what it represents. It represents you and what you've given is to us on the cross. We're grateful and thankful for it. Lord, as we again open up your book and focus in on what you've done for us, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit. I pray you would guide us, direct us, open up our eyes, our ears, our hearts and our minds to what you have for us here. And again, I pray this is of permanent value, and I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as we've said, this is the day that we remember Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples to share one last Passover supper. Matthew 26 says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of*

sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

So Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might too symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis and it's what we call "the Lord's table." We celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, and that means asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas in our own life where he's convicting us of sin, by confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53 says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well we've been following the life of Christ in the gospel of Mark. Through the whole of chapter 12 Jesus has been dealing with religious leaders who clearly see him as an existential threat and want nothing more than to see him gone.

Last time out we looked at Jesus' final summation of the character

and content of those folks and their ministries, and this is what he said in *Mark 12:38*. 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."*

These are the shepherds who have actually exploited their sheep for undeserved honor, undeserved respect, and for any type of material gain he could squeeze from them, including but not limited to exploiting the widows who had turned to them for help.

And so after explaining this, Jesus retires to a spot where he can observe the people going into the temple courtyard and they're going past a series of boxes or urns that have all been set out for giving. In actuality there were some thirteen different urns, each designated for a specific task that people would put money into as they entered the courtyard. So Jesus is watching as these people go about the task at giving.

It says: *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."

Well there are at least three lessons we can glean from Jesus' observation. The first is how we give; the second is why we give; and the third is where we give. So the first lesson, the first lesson is about how we give and we give or we should give surreptitiously. Now that's a fifty-cent word, but it's the perfect word to describe how we should give because the dictionary definition of "surreptitiously" is this -- quote -- "in a way that attempts to avoid notice or attention; secretively."

Well as you probably observed that's not at all the way the temple is set up for the people to give. I mean, Jesus had taken up the observation of people coming into the temple -- quote -- where he saw rich people putting in large sums of money. Well that's exactly the opposite of the way God wants us to give. It should be something just between you and God.

You know, I studiously avoid any in depth knowledge of who gives what in our church because I genuinely don't want to know for my sake and for their sake. And the principle is actually very

simple. Jesus describes two very different rewards for giving and there's really two different places in which those rewards are given. One is on earth, and the other one's in heaven. And you can get a temporary reward right here on earth through your giving as these wealthy folks at the temple did or you can put off that reward until you arrive in heaven where it will have lasting value just like an investment.

This is how Jesus put it in *Matthew 6:1*. He said: *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 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. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*

What Jesus is telling us, he says play your card so close to the vest that when you give, your left hand doesn't even know what your right hand is doing. What he's saying is what we need to do is guard very carefully our investments in our heavenly bank account. Do our very best not to let the information leak out lest in some

way it might diminish the returns that we're going to have eternally.

And so first we give surreptitiously. Secondly, we want to look at why we give, and actually we give just like this widow gave. We give because it's our passion. You see, if you are one of Christ's sheep you were also by definition a steward and you are a steward of the kingdom of God. And a good steward is someone who is passionate about that kingdom, I mean, he or she owns the kingdom and the kingdom owns him or her. And his passion, his passion is to do his part to see that kingdom grow. He's determined to advance the kingdom of God and he's determined to do it through the local church. As the widow is doing for the temple, we do for the local church and that's a lot of responsibility and it can also seem onerous if you don't have a passion for stewardship because passion is really what drives stewardship.

Just let me give you an example. I could rattle off a dozen things that you have to do if you want to be successful at fishing. And if you think of those things as a list of tasks, they could seem onerous as well. You need a rod, a reel, a line, you need lures, you need a lake, you need boat, you need knowledge, you need patience, you need skill. I could go on and it could start to sound like a real drag if you have no passion at all for fishing.

But if you have that passion, well then all that stuff is a piece of cake.

Now let's say, I said, "As a fisherman you need to know more about lures, you need to know about all the different kinds of lures, there's surface lures, there's spoons, there's rubber worms. Well, if fishing is your passion, then that kind of learning, it's not work at all. It's a pleasure. And you're literally all ears when you hear about it. Well it's that same passion that makes stewardship a pleasure instead of a chore. There's Jesus who said "*We are to be fishers of men,*" he wants our passion pointed in that direction.

So back in 2013, I gave a series on stewardship that spoke about how we are to steward our money. And back then I said the best advice I could give to you is to get ahold of Randy Alcorn's little book. You may have seen this, it's been downstairs. I submit to you this is a wonderful book to get ahold of and read. It's called "*The Treasure Principle.*"

First I want to give you a little background about Randy Alcorn, the author. For thirteen years Randy Alcorn pastored the Good Shepherd Church in rural Oregon and back in the '90s he was a passionate pro-life activist. He participated in numerous rescues

where he and others literally attempted to shut abortion clinics down and he wound up being arrested and sued numerous times.

I should point out that right now today under our current president, a similar protest will cost you up to five years in jail, which is exactly what Lauren Handy, a grandma from Washington received just this week when she peacefully protested an abortion clinic for two hours.

Well, back then when Randy was protesting at clinics, the only weapon the abortionists had, the only weapon they fought back with was financial and they wound up at one point getting an \$8.4 million settlement against him. In addition, they also obtained the ability to garnish any salary that he made that was over the minimum wage, thus achieving their ultimate victory. They were able to literally say to Randy Alcorn, we're going to force you to give part of your salary to our abortion clinic.

Well in an article in *Christianity Today*, Tim Stafford described Alcorn's response. He said, "After a flurry of phone calls, prayers and consultations, Alcorn concluded that he had only one alternative. Sunday evening he met with the church's elders to resign his position. On the spot, they wrote him a check for the week of May he had already worked. Though he was a founding pastor

of the church, though it was the only church he had ever known since seminary, though he had expected to spend the rest of his life as a pastor there, he quit his job. On Monday morning he caught his breath and began to ask the next question: What would he do with the rest of his life?"

By God's providence Randy also happened to be a gifted and prolific author. He began to write books and novels. He and his wife formed a nonprofit ministry called Eternal Perspective Ministries or EPM that he went to work for at minimum wage.

Tim Stafford continues. He says: "Alcorn's books have reached a growing audience. He has spoken to wider and more influential audiences across the country, sticking to his passions of generosity, missions, and defending life. It has been years now since EPM needed contributions to pay its modest expenses; instead the organization has become a de facto foundation, passing on all royalty checks to mission causes. In the last three years EPM has given away \$500,000." This is over ten years ago.

"Meanwhile the Alcorns live and do business in the same modest three-bedroom home. (Four years ago they added an office to the garage.) They drive used cars that are donated to the organization. Alcorn still receives the minimum wage, plus

speaking honorariums. He has not used an ATM or written a check since 1990."

So you can guess this is a man whose financial walk and talk lines up precisely. And so Randy Alcorn, he sums up his approach to money by what he calls "the Treasure Principles." And it's based on Jesus' words in *Matthew 6*. Jesus said: "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*"

So what I wanted to do is just give you a very brief outline of his little book *The Treasure Principle* and the six principles that he speaks of. Number one, the first principle, he says, is that God owns everything. I'm only his money manager. We are the manager of the assets that God has entrusted, not given, to us. *Psalm 24* says: *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.* I mean every single thing you and I can see on this earth, everything belongs to God. And that's easy to accept in theory but oftentimes it's not so easy to accept in practice.

You see, the court system made it impossible for Randy Alcorn to own anything. It would have just been passed on to an abortion clinic. So his solution was to just stop owning things. And it was a step that he describes as granting him incredible freedom. This is what he says about owning things. He says: "The greater the mass, the greater the hold that mass exerts. The more things we own, the greater their total mass, the more they grip us, setting us in orbit around them. Finally, like a black hole, they suck us in. Giving changes all that. It breaks us out of orbit around our possessions. We escape their gravity, entering a new orbit around our treasures in heaven." So being stripped of the ownership of things was not limiting to Randy, in fact it was liberating.

Principle two is: "My heart always goes where I put God's money." He says, watch what happens when you reallocate your money from temporal things to eternal things. And he asked, have you ever owned a stock, have you ever owned a bond? If you invest in anything, real estate whatever, you know the minute you put your money in it, you instantly have an interest in it. He says folks say, you know I just can't get into missions, they're so far away. He says there's a secret to changing that and the secret is to invest in them, literally start owning a part of a missionary's support. Remember what Jesus said. Jesus said, "Where your

treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Principle number three is: "Heaven, not earth, is my home." As he points out, we are citizens of a better country, a heavenly one according to Hebrews. Alcorn puts it this way, he says, suppose you lived in France and you were sent to live temporarily in the United States and you were given a housing allowance. He says, would you, A, furnish your motel room or, B, send the money home? He goes on to say, everything we furnish here is temporary. And all of us are actually headed back home. Said, the amazing thing is that we can send that money home today, and we do that by giving. *Matthew 10* says: "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

Well, the fourth principle is one that I often preach about at funerals. You see, it was Randy Alcorn who pointed out that a line always starts with a dot. You put your pencil to a paper, the first thing that you do is you make a dot. Now if you decide to move that pencil forward, you turn that dot into a line. Well he pointed out that some folks live for the dot while others live for the line. And he defines the dot as that time between your birth and your death. If you live for the line, if you live for the dot -- well, I'm sorry. If you live for this dot, he points out you

don't give much thought to eternity because the only thing that matters is really the time between your birth and your death. However, if you live for the line, you realize that your existence may have started with a dot but that line goes on forever, and you start living not for the temporary dot but for that eternal line.

And so principle four is that I must not live for the dot of this life alone, I must live for the line. And he points out if you live for the dot you're going to get treasures that end up either in a junkyard or a museum, whereas he says *moth and rests destroys and where thieves break in and steal*. If you live for the line you're going to get a treasure that will literally last forever.

The fifth principle is this, he says, "Giving is the only antidote to materialism." Alcorn says, "Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater person and a greater agenda. It dethrones me and exalts Him." He notes that *PBS* once ran a special on materialism in the United States and its title described a disease that this secular station saw as attacking America. The disease was called "Affluenza." *PBS* stated: "The average American shops six hours a week while spending approximately 40 minutes a week playing with his kids." He said, "In 90 percent of divorce cases, arguments about money played a prominent role." Mind you, this is all being reported by a secular organization. Well, Randy Alcorn's

prescription for this disease is literally one word. It's "giving."

This is what he says. He says: "As long as I still have something, I believe I own it. But when I give it away, I relinquish control, power, and prestige. At the moment of release the light turns on. The magic spell is broken. My mind clears. I recognize God as owner, myself as servant, and others as intended beneficiaries of what God has entrusted to me. Giving doesn't strip me of vested interests: rather it shifts my vested interests from earth to heaven, from self to God. Of course, money isn't all I can give. Time, wisdom, and expertise are wonderful gifts. Giving in any form breaks affluenza's fever. Giving breaks me free from the gravitational hold of money and possessions. Giving shifts me to a new center of gravity...Heaven."

And finally -- this is an interesting one -- principle number six, he says, "God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving." You see, the American way is to constantly raise my standard of living so I'm always just barely making it. If God gives us more money than we need, perhaps he's giving it to us so that we can give it more generously. And it doesn't just apply to people, it applies to churches as well. America is the wealthiest nation in the history of humanity. He

says, what if our phenomenal wealth was intended for us to pass on to churches that are in poverty? Isn't that what Paul told the Corinthians in *2 Corinthians 8*? He said, *your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."* He says, you know, what if we are the -- quote -- "Fed Ex" guys who instead of delivering what God gave us to deliver, decided to keep it for ourselves?

You know, people talk about the tithe and ten percent is a great place to start a tithe. He goes on to say, if God prospers you, why not increase your giving to 20 or 30 or more percent? He points out Pastor Rick Warren who made a fortune on his books. He practices reverse tithing. He gives away ninety percent and keeps ten. What he's actually doing is sending it on ahead of himself. In fact he's actually a brilliant financial planner because he's planning eternally, he lives on ten percent and says it's more than enough. And no doubt Randy Alcorn's idea of giving is radical as well, but so is his life experience and so, he points out, is his joy. And what comes through this treasure principle is the sheer joy and pleasure that he has found in radical giving.

And to sum up this wonderful little book, this is what he says. He

says: "In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, Olympian Eric Lindell said: 'I believe God made me for a purpose. And when I run I feel his pleasure.' Those who have discovered the treasure principle will testify, 'When I give, I feel his pleasure. There have been days when I've lost focus, and then a need arises and God leads me to give. Suddenly, I'm infused with energy, purpose, and joy. I feel God's pleasure.'"

As the elders begin distributing the bread, just take some time to consider how you give and why you give, and ask yourself, does it warrant some examination? Does it warrant some correction?

1 Corinthians 11:28 says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

I repeat the same byroad every single time about how incredibly serious communion is, and I warn us all, to enter into it in an unworthy manner as to court disaster. And so I plead with you, if you're not absolutely confident that you're a child of the King,

that you're one of Christ's own, that you've trusted in him as your Savior, if you first need, however, to be reconciled to your brother and sister before you bring that sacrifice to the altar, then just pass the elements on. If you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution and get right with God first.

But on the other hand, and I point this out each month as well, you can make the mistake of thinking you have to be flawless, you have to be spotless and sinless, you're not worthy to receive communion, and the enemy loves that mistake as well. I point out being a child of the King doesn't mean you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you don't fall, it means that you recognize that the salvation that you have received is a gift that no one has ever been able to earn by -- quote -- "being good." And so we quote Dane Ortlund who says, "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do."

And in addition, we remember, we understand that when we fail, when we do sin, we sin because God's Spirit is now inside of us convicting us. And when we are convicted, we simply turn to *1 John 1:19*, which says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are without sin, it means that when we sin, we understand that we have an advocate in heaven itself speaking with the Father, someone speaking on our behalf. As *1 John 2* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

And that's really the key to our ability to sit here at the Lord's table. We're not here with our own righteousness, we're here with Christ's righteousness in our place and that makes us free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. As we've said, he lived the life that we were supposed to live, then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so also that we could be made worthy of heaven.

And just understand, God's not going to love you any more tomorrow than he does right here, right now today. Because before the foundation of the earth, God already loved you to the max. And God saw back then every single sin you would ever commit. So as we sit here this morning, I ask that you would ask God for the grace, for the wisdom, for the courage to examine every aspect of your life, but in particular, to examine how and why we give.

1 Corinthians 11:23 says this: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take, and eat.

Would the elders begin distributing the cup. And as they are, again we've been looking at the widow, we're looking at this widow who's giving so radically of what little she has. Understand, Jesus was so moved by what he saw in this widow that he stopped what he was doing, he gathered all of his disciples, and he said, he indicated that this was something so important that he needed their complete attention, he needed their complete understanding, and so we've been trying to glean some principles for giving from this circumstance.

If you've seen thus far that our giving, first of all, should be surreptitious, but you could argue that the widow's giving wasn't because actually Jesus clearly saw her, but understand that her giving probably to her would have been a source of shame rather than pride because the amount that she was giving was so tiny. I mean, it was literally two coins that if you add both of those coins together, its value would have been less than what we consider a penny. Yet Jesus singled out this amount as actually

greater than all the other giving that he saw.

It says: *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."*

So our first principle is on how we give. Our giving should be such that our left hand has no idea what our right hand is doing. Our second principle is about why we give, and that's again about our passion. It's those six principles contained in Randy Alcorn's *Treasure Principle* book which you really do need to read.

Our third principle that I want to look at this morning is where we give. Many of us have heard tithing sermons that focus entirely on *Malachi 3*, which says this: *"Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."* I've got to say, prosperity preachers love this

text because you can twist it in any number of ways, but what it actually means in context is usually quite different than the way it's often presented.

You got to remember, at the time that Malachi wrote this, Israel was a theocracy. That's a government that's run with God as its head. The tithe was actually a tax that ran the government. The tithe was what made everything go. In fact there were three separate tithes in all of Israel, wound up having a tax right around 23 percent for itself citizens.

Malachi says, "*bring the full tithe into the storehouse,*" and that's often interpreted as bringing in ten percent of your income into the church. In fact, I've often, I've heard occasionally that some churches actually bill their congregants based on that formula but that's not at all what Malachi was getting at, that's not what he intended at all.

You see, the storehouse was not the church. Storehouse was actually a place inside the temple, and Israel had sinfully ignored their responsibility to maintain the supplies that the Levites needed to run the temple. I mean, that's what Malachi was prophesying against. You see, the Levites were given the responsibility of keeping the temple in order, of literally keeping

it running and they as a tribe had a unique set of circumstances. When the inheritance was given out to all the different tribes in Israel, they had no inheritance that was given to them. They were told that they were to rely instead on the offerings that would be brought into the temple. It was supposed to be part of the tithe. The storehouse was literally a place where food and grain and other offerings were to be physically brought in in order to keep the Levites going. And it was all part of the tax structure that enabled Israel to exist as a nation. It wasn't optional. It was mandatory, just as our taxes are mandatory to us, and it was being ignored.

Well today that tax has now been translated into what's commonly referred to as the tithe which simply means ten percent of your income. And so many churches and ministries claim that according to Malachi 3, you're all being charged ten percent of your income and you're required to bring it in to the church. But that's not to be found anywhere in the New Testament. In fact there's no obligatory tithe in all of the New Testament. In fact, the only place in the New Testament where you read of the tithe is Jesus brings it up when he castigates the Pharisees.

This is *Luke 11*. Jesus says: *"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love*

of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

So how does the New Testament speak about giving? Well, we find that in Luke 6. God says: *"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."*

2 Corinthians 9:6 says the point is this: *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

The point is there is no set formula in the New Testament of how much we are to give and to whom we are to give it. There's no such thing as compulsory giving as was the case in the Old Testament law. Rather, God sees our giving as a natural outflow of the gifts we've already received; hence, we should have a great sense of joy rather than compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver. We are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. And the next obvious question is, okay, where then do we do that? Well, the church is certainly an important part of that but I don't believe we're

required to take all of our offerings and bring them exclusively into the church. There's all kinds of other ministries that God blesses that requires funds that, they got to come from somewhere. There are individuals in ministries that God will bring into each of our lives for the express purpose of being able to gift them as God has gifted us, and that requires wisdom and that requires prayer.

Just personally from ourselves, oftentimes Jan and I will both sense God leading us where to give some money and how much to give and we oftentimes just kind of feed off ourselves as to what the amount might be. Folks often ask me if there's any one individual or ministry that I know of that they might be able to help. That's helpful as well.

One of the blessings of this church that not a lot of people know is this is a very generous church. This church takes very seriously Jesus' words when he says, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

So as you take the cup, ask the how, the why, and the where questions. First is the "how" question, am I giving surreptitiously. The "why" question is, again, am I passionate towards the kingdom following those treasure principles as Randy Alcorn lays out in his little book. And finally, ask yourself how well you're tackling the "where" question, where you put the resources that God has given to you. Just take a moment to ask yourself that question.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says: In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." So take, and drink.

Well as you know, this is the head, hands and feet part, this is where we try to come up with something practical for this. I just mentioned some of the practical ways that you can do it but I wanted to open with a scripture from *2 Corinthians 8:9*. It says: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

I mean obviously that is the heart of the gospel. I mean, Jesus didn't simply define wealth, he is the source, he is the origin of

anything that portends to wealth. And so we have the King of the universe becoming an abject pauper not only to identify with us but also how to show us how to excel in leading a life of absolute poverty. And he lived that life of absolute perfection so he could take that perfection to a cross and offer it freely to anyone who puts their faith in Him.

And he identified so thoroughly with that poor widow not because he had to but because he wanted to, because he, too, became poor, stripped of everything, naked and nailed to a cross so that we could have the most profound wealth imaginable, a wealth that you and I are incapable of even imagining. It's all waiting for us.

This is the way Peter puts it in *1 Peter 1:3*. He says: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. That's a treasure unlike anything you've ever experienced, and it's all waiting for everyone of Christ's sheep.*

And understand something, much of that treasure is what we create while we are here on earth. And we all know the cliché, "you can't take it with you." What we need to embrace is the sure knowledge

that we can send it on ahead of us. Let's pray.

Father, I just thank you for this widow, I thank you for the example that she is to us. This is a woman giving out of complete poverty, having no resources whatsoever left but you. I think of Randy Alcorn who essentially did the exact same thing, waking up the day after he quit his job, saying, now what, Lord and just the evidence and the proof that you would not be out given by anyone. I praise you and thank you for how you have responded in his life, and I pray that we could take his example and his principles and use that to revolutionize our lives and our giving. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.