

October 28th, 2018
Mark 12: 38-44 (from Proper 27)
St. George's Episcopal Church
Fr. Chris

2 Copper Coins

2 copper coins hardly worth a penny, but precious in the sight of God.

She gave everything, not merely something from her surplus. She gave everything she had to live on. A tough standard to match, but a challenge to each of us.

The question then is: how can we become a more giving people. How can I give more each day?

Stewardship begins with realizing I have resources and assets in abundance to be used for other purposes than self-gratification and gain. How I realize this is through cultivating an attitude of gratitude about the many blessings I personally enjoy. And they are abundant. As I said a few weeks ago, I am not 'poor Chris' anymore: I am a rich, very wealthy man. God has blessed me with everything I ever needed, and then some. How I shepherd and use those resources is what stewardship is all about.

Generosity begins in our hearts. We must cultivate giving hearts. This comes from eyes wide open to see needs around us, not what we think what we need, but what others need. It is a part of that servant orientation we spoke of last week. How am I called to serve today? How am I called to serve in this moment?

What do I have to give? I have my most precious resource: my time. I can give of myself. I can be present to someone in need. I can listen. I can offer comfort. I can volunteer my time to serve others and the common good. I can give of my own wealth and figure out what is needed.

Why should I think about giving to a church or faith community? Because it is our faith community that is the source and reason for our giving. Faith communities teach and inspire us to be the people that God is calling us to be. They remind us of that call each time we gather.

At St. George's we are given opportunities throughout the year to reset our hearts toward generosity and a generous response to recognizing our abundance. Every

other week the Foodshare Truck comes to visit us, not to enrich us, but to enable us to minister to those in need in our midst.

You hear about toilet paper all the time lately at St. George's. When I look at the price of 30 toilet paper rolls in the grocery store, I balk at the amount. \$17.00 seems like a lot of money in the moment, but for me it is only a drop in the bucket when I think about it. I waste more than that each week, so I realize I can be a better steward of what I have been given and put it to a better use. 3-4 rolls of that toilet paper will save a poor family or a retired person on a fixed income about four or five dollars for a four pack of toilet paper. 30 rolls of toilet paper will save about 7 families that amount of money that they can put to use to put food on their tables. Something so small can make a big difference. A couple of copper coins. A few moments of my time.

Have you ever been in the community in a store or at a coffee shop, and watched someone discreetly pay for someone else's grocery order, or make up the difference that person needs at the register? I am inspired when I see this. Their eyes are wide open to do good for others: they see a need and do something about it. This may seem small to us, but it is something big to the recipient and even bigger to us because it feels good to be generous!

We have many drives during the year. We collect school supplies and backpacks. In a few weeks we will collect turkeys for Foodshare and raise money for the cause of feeding those who are hungry and poor in a region which is so blessed and rich. Weeks later we will collect toys for poor children in Hartford so that they might be blessed with some gifts this Christmas. In each case, we are paying forward our blessings and abundance to bless others who need our generosity.

No matter how much we give, it is still a drop in the bucket of human need around us. That could sound depressing until you hear the story of the poor widow and her 2 copper coins. The intentions of the giver matter. 2 copper coins are more in the sight of God than huge gifts given out of a surplus of abundance. A small gift is a huge investment in good. Giving inspires more giving. Even what some might consider a small gift- a few dollars in the grocery line or a buck or two at a coffee shop makes a big difference in someone's life. A few times I have had people come to me and says thanks for something I gave, maybe even long ago, that I no longer remember, but they come to me to thank me for the generosity I participated in. And really, it is not about what a generous guy I am, because I am no more than a channel through which God's love and generosity passes on to others.

When I say this, “the world needs our generosity,” imagine what our world would look like, how harsh and cold it would be, if no one shared what they have with others. Imagine what a world it would be if everyone were out for him or herself. We know we can do better than this, and we know that we have the ability to prevent our community from sinking to this. And it will not do so, because here and in many other faith communities like St. George’s, people are leaning, being inspired, being led to be as generous as they can be. St. George’s, at its core, is a school for giving. St. George’s is a pay it forward church.

Being a giving, generous person is all about our personal response to the love of God who has blessed each of us with such abundance.

Today we ask that at least part of your giving be to keep the lights on here at home, that this parish church can continue to be a beacon of hope and a place of generosity and a source for caring in this community. Imagine what Bolton and Coventry would be like if we were not here. Imagine what your life might be like without St. George’s in it. AMEN

A prayer as you think about your own pledge: (The General Thanksgiving –Book of Common Prayer)

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks

for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,

be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

Offertory Sentences... From the Book of Common Prayer

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High. Psalm 50:14

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name; bring offerings and come into his courts. Psalm 96:8

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:2

I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans

12:1

If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23, 24

Through Christ let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his Name. ...Let us with gladness present the offerings and oblations of our life and labor to the Lord.

But do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:15, 16

O Lord our God, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power; because you have created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. Revelation 4:11

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. For everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, and you are exalted as head over all. 1 Chronicles 29:11.