

## THE BIG IDEA: God gives increase to those who increase what they give.

### The Take-Off

Let me simply start with giving you today's goal: not just to teach through our 7th and final shift, but also to wrap up the entire "Shift" series.

Here's how we're going to do that: I'm going to read the end of Luke 20 and the beginning of Luke 21 and then we'll talk about 2 mites, 3 words, a shift and a number.

It sounds like a lot - and it is - but hang with me and we'll get through it together!

Let's read **Luke 20:41 - Luke 21:4**.

### 1. 2 Mites

- a. At the end of chapter 20, we find Jesus highlighting Himself as the Lord and why the religious leaders couldn't (or wouldn't) accept that: they loved to be the center of attention!
- b. In 20:47, He specifically mentions the horrible things they did to widows, and that leads us right into the drama that unfolds in the first 4 verses of chapter 21, which ironically deal with a widow and the greatest offering ever given.
- c. It was also the smallest, and we need to understand it.
  - She gave 2 coins - called mites
  - A mite was worth 1/8 of a penny, so her offering was a quarter of a cent
  - To further grasp how small this is: if she gave that same offering EVERY Sunday (which would make her the most consistent giver ever), in one year she would have given a whopping 13 CENTS!
  - At that rate, it would take her 7,692 YEARS to give what the average church goer gives in a year
  - This was a SMALL offering in amount, but not in impact.
- d. Why? Because it was ALL she had to give, and she gave it.
- e. 21:4 / "she has given everything she has" (NLT) "all she had to live on" (NIV)
- f. The Greek phrase used here means "all the life" - implies that her giving was so generous it could impede her very survival!
- g. I love this quote from Warren Weirsbe: "When it comes to our giving, God sees more than the *portion*; He also sees the *proportion*. Men see *what is given*, but God sees *what is left*, and by that He measures the gift and the condition of our hearts."
- h. In other words, while most people give God leftovers, this widow gave God the entire meal.
- i. That leads us to the 3 words.

### 2. 3 Words

- a. This widow understood what the Holy Spirit showed me one week into the fast, and if you've taken part in any of the Tuesday nights of Prayer and Presence, then you've seen these 3 words.
- b. Here's the first journal entry that I made of them: **[IMAGE: 3 Words]**
- c. DECREASE - INCREASE - RELEASE
- d. As we talk through each of these, we're going to turn to an amazingly profound chapter on grace and giving
- e. 2 Corinthians 9 is packed with truth, but it also highlights the 3 words that the Spirit spoke to me
- f. First word, **DECREASE**:
  - There is something that happens when we decrease, and while we don't know specifically what happened to that widow, we do know what God does when people give generously
  - It's found in **2 Corinthians 9:6**
  - A lot of us tell God that we'll give more when we get more - we want increase to precede decrease
  - But there is no faith in that, and faith is what it takes to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**)
  - What do we learn from this? Simply this: **to have more, give more.**
  - Not because God is obligated, but because He is faithful
- g. Second word, **INCREASE**:
  - Look what happened in **2 Cor. 9:8** after the generous giving in verse 6
  - Because they gave all they had, God gave them all they would need!
  - God is moved when we give! (**Acts 10:31**)
  - What do we learn from this? Simply that **empty places become divine spaces**

- He fills those empty places with resources, with grace, with answered prayers, but most importantly, with himself! (John 3:30)
  - And as great as that is, we must still ask the question, “Why?” Why are we given more?
- h. Third word, **RELEASE**:
- There is a cycle of giving that is the normal expectation of a follower of Jesus
  - We don’t have time today to fully teach it (we will in July, though), but the short version is that **open hands complete the cycle**
  - This is what we find in **2 Cor. 9:10-11**
  - As we give, God gives more which means that we have more to give
  - Back to Luke 21 and that widow - ask yourself who a generous God would be more likely to pour more out to, the wealthy “God tippers” or the widow who gave it all?
  - God isn’t looking for people to give to; he’s looking for people to give through.
  - DECREASE (me) \* INCREASE (him) \* RELEASE (heaven)

### 3. A Shift and a Number

- a. What does this look like practically? Let’s look at our last shift and **compare greed and generosity**:
- Resource come to me vs Resources flow through me
  - Giving is an obligation vs Giving is an opportunity / **2 Cor. 8:3-4; 9:7**
  - Needs to be seen vs Sees the need / **Luke 20:46** and **2 Cor. 8:4**
  - Closed hand vs Open hand
    - God isn’t raising hoarders; he’s raising vessels!
    - Our size isn’t the full measure of our impact
    - 10% of our city would be 1,600. But we could stay that size and allow resources to flow through us and reach 10% of 100 cities!
  - Driven by fear vs Driven by faith
    - Both ask “What if?” questions
    - “What if we run out?” or “What if God shows out?”
  - Will never give enough vs Will never give enough / greed will never fund vision; generosity will never feel like it’s funded the vision enough

#### The Landing

As we’re bringing this week to a close - and the entire Shift series to an end - what’s the Big idea?

Simply this: **God gives increase to those who increase what they give.**

That means as we give our increase offering, we can stand in faith, full of confidence, and trust the truth of **2 Corinthians 9:10-11**.

I want you to hold your offering and listen as I read it, and then we’ll receive the increase.

*10 For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity[a] in you.*

*11 Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.*

Let’s pray.