

GOD IS PLEASED WHEN WE GIVE**Luke 21:1-4****(Read Luke 21:1-4)**

INTRO: How do you see God? Some don't have a very good God concept because most often he is portrayed in scripture as a Father and since they did not have a very good father, their picture of God the Father is not a pleasant one. On top of that the idea of striving to make God happy with them is foreign. Many people, understandably respond with "Who cares if God is happy with me? The father I knew was hyper-critical and harsh – I don't know what pleasing God means."

Despite that, God the Father is the very best example of what a good father is. If you want to know what a good father is, all we have to do is look to our heavenly Father. Paul tells us that when we accept him as our Lord he adopts us into his family and we can call him Abba. (Romans 8:15), which is a close approximation of our word Daddy. Daddy is more than another way to refer to a male parent – it's a term of endearment.

My brothers and sisters and I called our father, Daddy. He was gentle and kind and we knew we were cherished by him and cherished him back. His grandkids adored him too. He's a tough act to follow – but I do my best. My sister Beth commented on this photo from Easter – two weeks ago. She said she loved the picture and one of the reasons is that so often she sees Daddy in me. She said I have Daddy's hands. That is a high honor for me.

But an even higher honor is to reflect our Abba Father in heaven. One of the reasons my dad was so cherished by everyone is that he did just that. I strive to as well.

Since a good daddy is so cherished, kids will strive to please him and to bring him joy. And that is my point today God is pleased when we give.

We began a five Sunday series last week entitled WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GIVE, with a talk that presented the fact that we find our purpose when we give. We don't give to please God since its part of what our purpose is, but a natural byproduct of giving is our Abba Father's pleasure.

It's a joy to please him when we do anything according to his plan and his design for us. For instance, British Olympic runner, Eric Liddell, who was the subject of the classic movie Chariots of Fire, said he felt God's pleasure when he ran. Well, here's another sure bet, when we give, we feel God's pleasure. And when we please God we know . . .

We can be pleased too

- We know we are on the right track when we are doing what God smiles upon. It's good to get praise. Who doesn't like it? For the past month or so, when we praise Fiona, she congratulates herself with applause. She is mirroring what we've been doing when she does another new thing – but she also knows that it pleases us, shouldn't she be pleased with herself as well?
- Paul told the Corinthian church, *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* 2 Corinthians 9:7. Does this mean God doesn't love a grumpy giver or someone who doesn't give at all? Nope! He loves us no matter how much or little we give – his love isn't based on what we do at all. But it pleases us to please him.
- You see

Generosity is more than action – it's an attitude

- The poor widow we read about in Luke 21 is a prime example. Rich people were walking through the court of women in the Temple and dropping bags of money in the collection receptacles. The implication is that it was a big show – who is the most generous giver? Who is the greatest? It was a "Can you top this?" session. But Jesus pointed out that if there was such a thing as the greatest giver, it would be the widow who, in faith, and knowing that you cannot out give God, gave everything she had.
- It's not the amount – it's the motive. Is it for the Kingdom, or is it for people to see and be impressed? We need to please the one who knows our motives and our hearts.
- That's why this widow woman was a blast of bright light for Jesus. Her giving certainly pleased her Lord. Despite that, this woman also was an example of how . . .

Giving costs something. The fact is, it actually means giving EVERYTHING.

- As I said a little bit ago, it's not the amount that matters – except in this case. In fact, what our giving often shows is what is left-over that matters and what we give reveals our faith.

- The widow that impressed Jesus so much only had a couple pennies to her name. It would have paid for a meal or two at best, but she put it all in the coffers. Hers was an act of obedience and faith. It was obedience in that we are called to bring our gifts *into the storehouse* (Malachi 3:10). And it was faith in that she took God's word for it when he promised that as we generously give he will *fabulously bless*. (Malachi 3:10).
- The others were giving out of obedience too – but it took much less faith when what they were giving was out of their abundance rather than any kind of need. I think it's important that we don't disparage the other givers in this account. Yes, the implication would make them look puffed up and braggadocio – but really – they are more like us Americans in comparison to Two-Thirds World givers. (Tell about offering at church in Webuye).
- This is not an indictment of our giving, instead it shows the fact that sacrificial giving pleases God. It also shows that he does not miss it when we give everything – and that when we do, he WILL take care of us. As I say over and over and over again, YOU CANNOT OUT-GIVE GOD.
- So even though giving, in any way, whether financially, time wise, spiritual, anything, has a cost to it, the investment is very worth it. We are investing in the Kingdom and God is pleased.

Conclusion: That's the truth. God is pleased when we give. And when we give we are pleased too. We know we are doing what God has called us to do.

And our giving reveals our attitude. Is it grateful or is it grudging. Is it humble or proud? What we bring to the table shows what is going on in our spirit.

And finally, godly generosity is sacrificial – it costs us everything. But as we give everything, we find how much God gives back. As we discover that we see just how much God is pleased when we give. Amen.