

WE OFFER

THE LESSON: MARK 12 + MATTHEW 6

Almost every church service includes a time of offering. Normally when we talk about offerings we are referring to the collection of money to help the Church in its work. In the service of Holy Communion our offerings of money are collected at the same time as the bread and wine are placed on the altar. This can remind us that whatever sacrifice we are making pales by comparison with the greater sacrifice that was made by Jesus *for* us.

The prayer that we use for the offering in “622” calls to our attention the fact that what we want to offer to God is beyond a simple sacrifice of money – rather, it is our whole selves! We say, “*We offer ourselves, our work, our play to be used in thy service*”. Perhaps we are not able to offer money, but we all have *something* to offer.

Throughout the Old Testament, we learn that God is not just concerned about receiving a sacrificial offering. He is more concerned about the heart of the person making the offering. The prophet Samuel reminded his readers that obedience is better than sacrifice. The prophet Hosea wrote that God desires “steadfast love” rather than sacrifice. And King David famously wrote in Psalm 51 that God wants us to bring the sacrifice of a repentant heart. These passages are all pointing us to the truth that God doesn’t just want empty tokens: he wants a whole-hearted offering from us.

When we turn to the New Testament Gospels, Jesus reveals even more about the kind of giving that pleases God.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

At home, find a quiet place and then spend a few moments meditating on the words of Colossians 3:17: “*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*”

Next make a quick inventory of what you have to offer: Time? Talents? Treasure? Ask God to show you how you can best use what you have in his service.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

Almighty God, whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honour thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR FAITHFULNESS IN THE USE OF THIS WORLD’S GOODS, BCP PAGE 734)

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MARK 12: **THE BEST GIVER**

⁴¹Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³And 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. ⁴⁴For 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.”

MATTHEW 6: **HOW TO HANDLE TREASURE**

¹“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.

²“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. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you...

¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.