

# Sermon Note: Out of Their Abundance

## Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

We conclude this liturgical year with a new sermon series, Truth Telling. In this series, we will explore familiar Gospel stories where Jesus speaks powerful truths that cut through our rationalizations and pride and demand a reset on our whole lives. Today, we dive into Jesus' surprising praise for a poor widow who, despite her poverty, gave "all she had to live on." In a bustling temple court filled with people making donations, Jesus' attention shifts not to those who gave large sums, but to a woman whose small offering revealed a heart of profound generosity and faith. This story challenges our understanding of abundance and invites us to consider how we, too, might give in ways that embody our trust in God.

In a world that often values outward appearances and assumes that "more" is always "better," Jesus' affirmation of the widow's gift invites us to reconsider what it means to give, to live abundantly, and to genuinely value what we have—no matter how much or how little. This story encourages us to consider not just what we give, but how we give.

### Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHL CFG0zCc4>

In *Spider-Man 2* (2004), Aunt May offers Peter Parker words of wisdom on the quiet strength and heroism of those who give selflessly, even when no one notices.

### Why This Video?

In this clip, Aunt May reminds us that true heroism often isn't flashy or celebrated but is instead rooted in small, selfless acts that go unseen. Her words honor those who give not because they have much, but because they are committed to doing what's right, even at a cost. This theme of humble, heartfelt generosity echoes the story of the widow's offering in the Gospel. Just as Aunt May describes people who give of themselves for the sake of others, this week's scripture encourages us to look beyond appearances and notice how quiet acts of sacrifice can make a powerful impact.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. Aunt May speaks about people who give selflessly without needing attention or praise. How does this view of heroism challenge or inspire you?
2. What do you think motivates people to keep giving, even when their contributions might seem small or unrecognized?
3. Aunt May says that "a hero can be anyone." What are some examples of small, everyday actions that can show selfless generosity?

4. Have you ever known someone who, like Aunt May describes, gave of themselves in a quiet but impactful way? What effect did their actions have on you or others?
5. Aunt May's words hint that true heroism involves sacrifice. What sacrifices, large or small, might a person need to make to show generosity in unexpected ways?

### **Mark 12:38-44 (CEB)**

<sup>38</sup> As he was teaching, he said, "Watch out for the legal experts. They like to walk around in long robes. They want to be greeted with honor in the markets. <sup>39</sup> They long for places of honor in the synagogues and at banquets. <sup>40</sup> They are the ones who cheat widows out of their homes, and to show off they say long prayers. They will be judged most harshly."

<sup>41</sup> Jesus sat across from the collection box for the temple treasury and observed how the crowd gave their money. Many rich people were throwing in lots of money. <sup>42</sup> One poor widow came forward and put in two small copper coins worth a penny. <sup>43</sup> Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than everyone who's been putting money in the treasury. <sup>44</sup> All of them are giving out of their spare change. But she from her hopeless poverty has given everything she had, even what she needed to live on."

### **Scripture Discussion Questions**

1. What do the scribes like to do according to Mark 12:38-40?
2. Why do you think Jesus emphasizes the widow's offering as more significant than the larger sums the wealthy gave? What does this reveal about Jesus' values?
3. How can we, as a small group or church community, create opportunities to practice and encourage the kind of selfless giving exemplified by the widow? What steps could we take to foster an environment of true generosity?
4. What steps will you take daily to live out what you learned from this scripture? How can you give in a way that genuinely reflects your faith and trust in God?

### **Additional (Optional) Questions**

1. The author of Mark's Gospel tells the long story of a rich man in chapter 10 (also found in Matthew and Luke) as well as references to rent, taxes, and the widow's offering in chapter 12. Why do you think financial matters were important to Jesus?
2. If you found yourself in the shoes (sandals) of a Sadducee or Pharisee, what might Jesus say that would be difficult for you to hear?
3. Can you think of any modern public figures who might find Jesus' truth related to financial matters in this passage uncomfortable? Discuss this with a trusted spiritual partner.
4. A tithe, as prescribed in the Bible, means to offer ten percent of your income back to God's work. Reread Mark 12:42-44. The widow obviously offered more than ten percent of what she had. What's the difference between giving from what we have leftover and giving sacrificially?

## **Weekly Action**

This week, make a commitment to practice “unexpected generosity” in a tangible way. Choose an area where you normally wouldn’t give—whether that’s an unexpected donation, offering extra time to someone in need, or supporting a cause you believe in. Consider doing this alongside a spiritual partner or friend, someone who can help you reflect on the experience and its impact on your faith.

As you engage in this practice, think about the motivation behind your giving. Allow this exercise to be an expression of trust in God’s provision, a step toward a heart that values generosity, not for the recognition it might bring, but for the quiet impact it has in the world.

## **Prayer**

Gracious God, we thank you for the example of the widow who gave all she had out of her deep faith in you. Help us follow her example, giving not just from our abundance but from our whole hearts. May our actions reflect your love and generosity, and may we be ever mindful of ways we can serve others with sincerity and humility. Amen.

*Disclosure: This Sermon Note was created by LJUMC staff with the support of AI tools.*