



We Give in Gratitude

Goal: To discover that no gift is too small in the eyes of God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Mark 12:41-44

The contrasts in this story are striking. When Jesus watched people put money into the temple treasury box, he saw “many rich people” throwing in “lots of money” (v. 41). Then “one poor widow” put in “two small copper coins worth a penny.”

Jesus assured his disciples this poor widow had contributed “more than everyone who’s been putting money in the treasury.” He lifted up the one, poor widow as making a greater contribution than many rich people. Why? Because “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” (v. 44).

The greater gift in the eyes of God was from the one who, in her “hopeless poverty” contributed all she had; this was in contrast to those who lived with abundance and contributed only such a small amount—their “spare change.”

The widow knew she lived by trusting God’s grace—meal to meal. So, she gratefully gave “everything she had.” Others made no such sacrifice. Today, we give in gratitude and give all we can to serve God. We rejoice that no gift is too small in the eyes of God.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

One of the first things younger children learn is about sharing—sharing toys, sharing time with a parent, taking turns. This story will help children make the connection between the act of sharing with faithful practices in response to God’s love for them. The news often highlights stories of children’s generosity in helping others, like the widow who was very poor. Connecting this story with the community in which you are living will be a good way to help the children consider the ways they can serve God by giving.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This story can connect to the lives of the children you teach in several ways. Younger children can be helped to think of the ways that they can serve God by giving. Interpreting giving as helping others is a good way for them to connect with this story. Older children who have more experiences and confidence will be able to both name their own experiences with giving and think about new ways that they can serve God by sharing their time, talents, or money.

*Dear God, you have shown us generous love through your blessings.
Help me to show the same to the children. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 11, 15, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

white cloth

variety of baskets and
offering plates

two pennies per child

bag full of coins

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Responding

Claiming
copies of GN 2

Praying
8½" squares of paper

Extra
copies of GN 3

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example,  ) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Before the session, take time to listen to **MM 4; SCM 15** and to learn the pronunciation so that you can teach it to the children.

Welcoming and Preparing

Greet the children by name and with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt the children to respond, “He is risen indeed!” These words are spoken during Eastertide, the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost.

Invite the children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, a white cloth (white is the liturgical [church] color for Eastertide), a variety of offering plates and baskets, and several pennies to place on the table. Invite the children to use construction paper to cut out small hearts and to place them on the table.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities, and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a volunteer to practice reading the Scripture passage for today.

As children are creating the worship space, invite the children to think about their giving. Ask: “When did you give something to someone else?” (For example, giving clothes to a cousin or a neighbor; usable toys to a charity or a day care center.) Children may give part of their allowance to the church. When they have named several examples of their generosity, say that today’s story is about someone who was generous with what she had.

Admire the efforts of the children to create a welcoming worship space.

Singing

Sing “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)”—**MM 4; SCM 15**. Tell the children that the lyrics are a paraphrase of Psalm 117 and come from Ghana, a country in Africa. This text was originally created in the Twi language. After you feel that the children know the song, invite them to come up with motions for “praise,” “God,” “nations,” “love,” and “forever.”

Praying

Turn on the candle. Wonder aloud how God must feel when we offer gifts to God.

After the children have responded, suggest that they breathe deeply and quietly for a moment. Then ask one of the children to offer a prayer or use the one below:

God of grace, you are the giver of all good gifts. Give us generous hearts. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



T Children may require additional time or explanation when making transitions. Use the visual schedule to alert them to change.

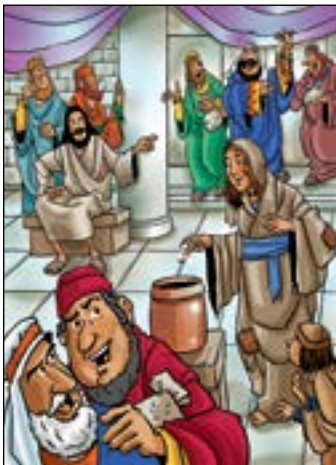
Preparing to Hear the Story

Offer that, in the story they will hear today, Jesus is at the temple, watching people bring their offerings.

Show **SCM 11**. Ask the children what they notice about the image.

Invite the children to take turns holding the bag full of coins. After getting a feel for the weight of the bag, ask them to imagine that it is filled with real gold and silver coins and wonder what it might be worth. Offer two pennies for each child to hold as you read the story.

Explain that the central figure in the story is a widow. Help the children understand the role and situation of widows in ancient times. Widows were a particularly impoverished group in biblical Palestine, having neither husband nor father to support them. Many times, widows would go to the temple to ask people to help provide for their needs.



Hearing the Story

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Invite a child to find Mark 12 in the Bible. Ask a volunteer to read Mark 12:41-44. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read **SCM 11**, a retelling of the story, or use the audio recording or e-book. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make the story more lively.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

A TD

Encourage participants to wonder about today’s story. Show children the widow and the wealthy men on **SCM 11**. Ask the children what they think Jesus meant when he said the widow had put in more than all the others.

Brainstorm questions and reflections on the story, such as: Why might the widow give her last two pennies as an offering? Why might Jesus praise the widow?

Tell the children they are going to make an acrostic to explore the words and meaning of the story. Have the children work alone or in pairs. Give each child or pair a copy of **GN 1** and a pencil. Ask the children to choose one of the acrostics, *OFFER* or *COINS*, and print words beginning with each letter that describe today’s story in some way. An example of an acrostic is provided in the sidebar.

Afterward, ask volunteers to share what they have written.

W woman
I interesting
D devoted
O offering
W wise

Singing M

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing together “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20; SCM 23**. Encourage the children to create simple hand motions to go with the song. You may choose to use the motions provided in “Loving and Serving God” at the end of the session. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace F MS

Distribute copies of **GN 2**, Bibles, and pencils. Tell the children that, in the temple, Jesus pointed out a number of differences between the widow who was poor and the people who were rich. Work as a group to find the answers in Mark 12:38–44 and fill in the chart.

Discuss:

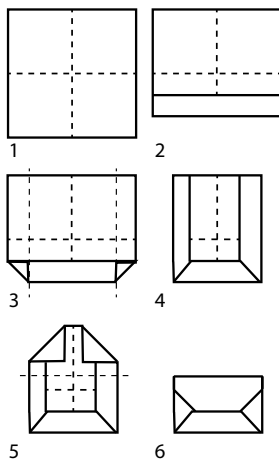
- ▼ What does it mean to give one’s all to serve God and others?

Read aloud the following statements, pausing after each one. Ask children to stand up if they agree with the statement. After each one, ask a few children to explain their choice:

- ▼ I think the poor widow did a wise thing.
- ▼ I can imagine myself giving everything to God.
- ▼ I would like to be a generous giver, like the poor widow.
- ▼ I would like to give more of my life to God.
- ▼ I trust God to provide what I need.

Praying God’s Grace C A

Invite the children to think about the offerings that they share with others. To move the focus away from only gifts of money, mention that we can all share our time and talents, and we can help others. Ask the children to name some of the nonmaterial things that they give to others. Invite them to write or draw these on a square piece of paper and fold it into an envelope using the instructions below.



- ▼ Fold paper in half. Open and fold in half the other way. (1)
- ▼ Open and, on bottom, fold halfway to midline fold. (2)
- ▼ Fold lower corners up and in to meet the edge. (3)
- ▼ Fold the sides in at the triangle. (4)
- ▼ Fold the upper corners almost to the vertical midline. (5)
- ▼ Fold the top down to tuck into the envelope and then crease. (6)

Consider presenting the offering envelopes to the stewardship or finance committee of your church.

Gather around a table. Place an offering plate or basket on the table. Ask the children to recall in silence the gifts that are named in their envelopes. Quietly have each person place his or her envelope in the offering plate or basket.



When all have offered their gifts, lead the following echo prayer:

Giving God, /
 help us to reach out to others who need our help. /
 Help us to give from the heart, /
 whether we are giving food, money, or a hug. /
 Thank you for the love and care you have given each of us. /
 Amen. /

Offering God's Grace



Distribute Bibles. Find out what happened just before Jesus and the disciples saw the widow. Ask a volunteer to read Mark 12:38–40 aloud.

Ask:

- ▼ Why was Jesus so angry with the scribes?
- ▼ How might verses 38–40 help us understand Jesus' reaction to the widow?

Let the children form teams of two or three. Read Mark 12:41–44.

Ask:

- ▼ What happened in the story? What's the plot?
- ▼ What's the point? What does the story want you to do?
- ▼ What was Jesus saying about rich people and poor people?

Ask each team to choose a way to tell this story to someone who has never heard it, for example, in a song, poem, or skit. As they work, circulate among the groups, helping them as needed.

When they have finished, have teams present their story. Ask:

- ▼ Why was the woman's gift worth more than the others?
- ▼ What does the story say to you about generosity?

Wonder together how your group can share this story with others.

LG *Teach kids about the power of teamwork. When kids learn to support others, cooperate, and problem solve as a group, they become better leaders. Serving others helps kids see firsthand that they have the power to make a difference.*



GN 3 Solution:

Two small coins.
I can serve God with my
time, talents, and money.

Extra Activity



Comment that a gift given joyfully and in faith is always pleasing to God. Wonder aloud if the woman from today’s story was worried that her gift was small. If not mentioned, add the reminder that it was everything she had. Wonder together if there were other ways the woman gave of herself.

Provide copies of **GN 3** and pencils. Ask the children to answer the two questions using the key. The answers to **GN 3** are provided in the sidebar.

Ask the children to consider gifts that they can offer. Say a prayer asking God to provide ways for them to offer their gifts and thanking God for being faithful.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Use “With My Hands Open Wide”—**MM 20; SCM 23**—as an action prayer. Invite the children to gather in a circle. Play the song and lead them in the following movements:

With my hands open wide, I will give to you (*extend open hands forward from chest, then extend arms outward, repeating three times*)

all that you need. (*face palms out with thumbs together at chest height, then make wide circular motions with hands, meeting thumbs in the center with each circle*)

With a happy heart, I will give to you (*thump hands on your heart in rhythm with the music, then extend arms outward, repeating three times*)

With a loving heart, I will give to you (*place hands on heart, then cross them over chest, and then extend your arms outward, repeating three times*)

Send the children by laying your hand on each child’s arm or shoulder and saying, “(Name), go live generously. God’s grace be with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

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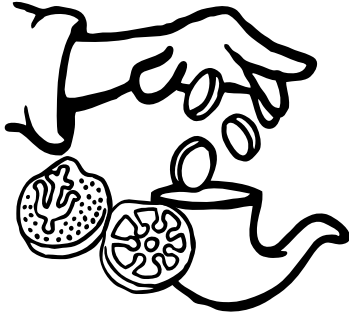
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What's the Difference?

	People Who Were Rich	Widow Who Was Poor
How much money did they give?		
What part of their total wealth did they give?		
What did their gift show about their relationship with God?		
What motivated their giving?		
What did Jesus think of their gift?		



What would you say is the main difference between the widow who was poor and the people who were rich?



KEY

A	C	D	E	G	H	I	L	M
N	O	R	S	T	V	W	Y	

What did the woman give?

_____ 75¢ _____ \$1.01 _____ 51¢ _____ 60¢ _____ 35¢ _____ 2¢ _____ 30¢ _____ 30¢ _____ 6¢ _____ 51¢ _____ 26¢ _____ 50¢ _____ 60¢

What can you do?

_____ 26¢ _____ 6¢ _____ 2¢ _____ 50¢ _____ 60¢ _____ 11¢ _____ 55¢ _____ \$1.00 _____ 11¢ _____ 15¢ _____ 51¢ _____ 10¢

_____ \$1.01 _____ 26¢ _____ 75¢ _____ 20¢ _____ 35¢ _____ \$1.05 _____ 75¢ _____ 26¢ _____ 35¢ _____ 11¢ _____ ,

_____ 75¢ _____ 2¢ _____ 30¢ _____ 11¢ _____ 50¢ _____ 75¢ _____ 60¢ _____ , _____ 2¢ _____ 50¢ _____ 10¢

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