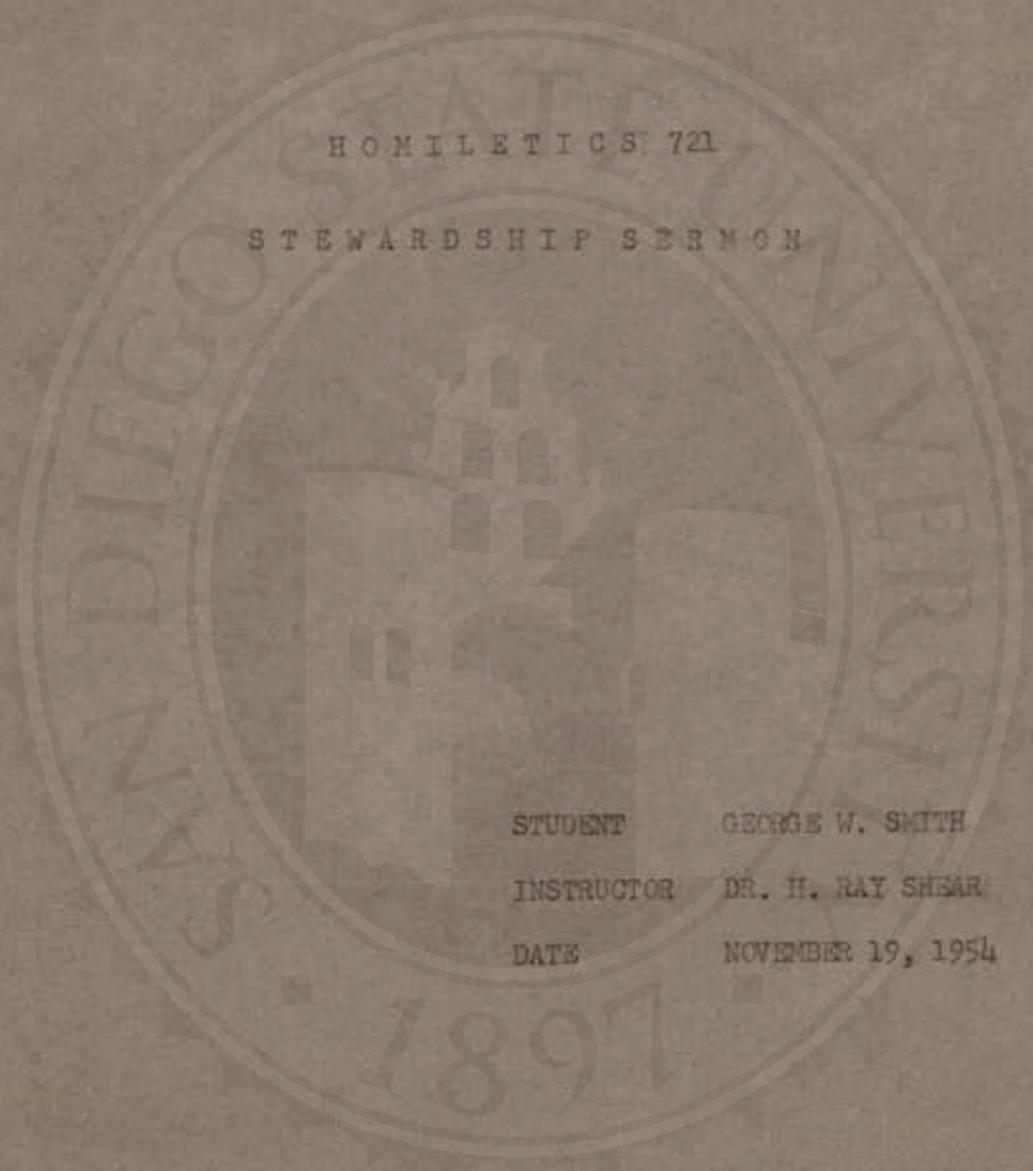


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HOMILETICS 721

STEWARDSHIP SERMON



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DATE NOVEMBER 19, 1954

"STRONG ANCHOR CHAINS"

MARK 12: 41-44

INTRODUCTION - CONTEXTUAL

I. FAITH

- A. Faith in God.
- B. Faith that God could use her gift.

II. HOPE

- A. A hope for God's blessings.
- B. A hope for God's grace.

III. LOVE

- A. A love for the church.
- B. A love for God.

CONCLUSION - APPLICATION

"STRONG ANCHOR CHAINS"

Jesus had silenced His official interrogators and the Sadducees, and had won the hearts of his honest questioners. While the storm of his wrath was still resounding in all hearts, he observed and pointed out an action of the loveliest beauty, a modest flower of Hebrew piety in the vast desert of formality. It was not to modest, however to catch, in this agitating hour, the eye of Jesus; and while the scribes were devouring widows houses, a poor widow could still, with two mites win honorable mention from the Son of God.

Three times a year the people came to the temple to place their offering in thirteen different boxes. The money went for various purposes, among them; temple expenses, sacrifices, oil, wine, incense, vessels and etc. Many of the rich people dropped in large sums, but for them it was not sacrificial. They were giving from the treasure of their surpluses. Along came a poor widow honored but unnamed. She placed her small offering into the collection plate, but for the presence of Jesus such venture of faith would have gone unnoticed. Christ realized that this woman had made a great spiritual venture. She believed in laying up treasures in heaven.

There are three "Strong Anchor Chains" exhibited in this story of the widows mite, they are faith, hope, and love. How much more do we need these "Anchor Chains" in our Christian life.

The widow had faith in God. She believed that the work of God must be carried on by men. Therefore, she gave all trusting that God

would take care of her. How good it is for any one to lay up treasures in the unbreakable bank of heaven.

Those who give liberally to the church let the world know that they are leaning on the Lord. It is peace of heart for them to give. There are many heroes to-day who would venture their all for the work of God's kingdom. A person with the love of God in his heart cannot help but have a spirit to give. But there are those who have not ventured out on their faith enough to give. They are like the young rich ruler to whom Christ said after putting his finger on his one lack; "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me". The young man did not have that venturing faith. Therefore he went away sorrowful.

The widow had faith that God could use her gift. In her gift she set clear the truth that the gift which counts is the gift that costs. Whatever men offer to God ought to be measured by the feeling of the heart and not by apparent values. To the poor who feel that they do not have the power of doing, are encouraged by our Lord not to hesitate to express their affection cheerfully out of their slender means, for if they concentrate themselves, their offering which appears to be small and worthless, will not be less valuable than if they had presented the treasure of Rockefeller.

To the rich this truth gives warning, that it is not enough if their giving surpass the poor, God does not see it that way. The widow chose to depart with all her living. She forgot her self and testified that all she possessed belonged to God. We too, should come to the

realization that the chief sacrifice God requires from us is self-denial. If we would forget self and practice self-denial our gifts will help us get our hearts right with God in the matter of money.

Secondly, the widow had hope. She was hoping for God's blessing which comes to all good stewards who do the Master's will. She like Paul "count all things lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus". She little guessed herself to be the one figure, where many were rich and interested the all seeing eye. She was unconscious of the fact that God converted her little gift into a great wealth for lowly hearts and instruction for the church. The widow's hope breed an inward joy. She expressed a joy of being in the Lord's presence. She no doubt had experienced a divine love and showed her gratefulness by making her contribution. It was not merely its proportion to her means; there was something in her heart, that lifted the gift out of routine into the realm of sacrifice. She possessed an abiding hope. Her hope was rooted in a preserverance of faith. She believed in God, and the word of God presevered those things hoped for until they had been accomplished. She had not already attained the joys and happiness which goes with an abundant life, her hope was in a state of imperfection. That which she had hoped of receiving was something to be strived for. The best way for her to do this was through her contribution.

In Malchi 3:10 we read: "Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now here with, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it". This express the blessings that come from supporting the work of God's kingdom.

The widow did not think that her gift was a means of growing in grace. She realized that grace was something to be hoped for. Of course, the more we do for God the more He will do for us. To receive God's gift of grace one must become favorable in the sight of God. Grace is God unmerited, unrestrained love toward Christ. Paul derived from God's grace not only the soul's reconciliation and new hope, but the whole moral uplifting and rehabilitation of human life through Christianity. This was the grace the widow hoped for and how much more should we strive for that grace to-day. Man needs this grace because it stands opposed to sin, it is God's way of meeting and conquering sin. Grace to the widow implied the only way of deliverance from sin. She realized that the divine goodness of God revealed itself to the "Chief Sinners" under the aspect of grace. What more could she do and what more could we do, than to hope for such a blessing as grace?

Nothing brings out more vivid the search and hope for grace in this widow's life as does Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". This is an excellent story of the Christian's journey through this world enroute to the Celestial City, to gain which he gives up all. Great temptations and great privations face christian pilgrims on their journey. Demas tried to get Christian and Hopeful to turn aside by saying to them: "Here is a silver mine and some digging for treasure. If you will come with a little pains, you may richly provide for yourselves". They did not turn back. In the city of Vanity Fair they were greatly tempted but they went steadfastly on to the Celestial City.

There are many temptations in our lives as was in the life of the widow. But when seeking the grace that come from God we must be as

Christian and Hopeful, keeping our eyes upon that city, which is our goal. As true stewards this is our duty. If the readiness is there we will sacrifice all to accomplish that for which we hope.

We see in this story of the widow's mite a mighty love. First, of this love is her love for the Church. She gave not a great portion of her possession to the Church, she gave all. Therefore, her heart went with her offering. An obscure and perhaps illiterate convert, undistinguished by any special gift, and only loved as the first Christian all loved each other. The secret of all hearts are made known in their love for the Church.

We should love the Church because, "Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it". Down through the ages the gates of hell have not prevailed against it. The Church as the means for bringing the kingdom of God upon the earth, will get plenty money when its members, like the widow, are willing to pay the price for inner happiness and contentment.

The story is told by Chappel of an old saint at a prayer meeting who stood and gave his testimony. So marvelous was the testimony of his Christian experience that a young man, so impressed by it, arose and said; "I would give the world for that old man's experience". "That's what it cost me", replied the old man in a gentle voice. Would it not be wonderful if we had more saints in our churches to-day? Those people who would give the world for God's kingdom.

The statement above bring^s to my mind the fact that there might be some pessimist who may ask; "Why should I give and support my Church"? The story of the widow answers this question. ~~We should support our~~

We should support our church for our own sake. From infancy until this presence moment she has been our spiritual mother. It was in the Church that our feet were planted upon a sure foundation. It was in the Church that the truths of God's word were unfolded. It was the Church that prepared us for rightful living. ^{the} The Church is a guide for our family. The Church provides comfort for the body, mind, and soul. The Church is the one institution which embraces you with her love in your youth and will not forsake you in old age. Thinking over the many ways that we have been helped by the Church we should rejoice when the offering plate is passed around. It gives us the opportunity to show our love for Christ in a more substantial way.

Stewards of God the task of Christianizing the world rest upon the Christian Church. Yes, we can look back over the past and see a splendid work we have done in World-Wide Mission. But what about those who are waiting to go out to the pagan world-waiting until the Church can send them. Every man who has been blessed by God should contribute sacrificially to such a cause. It is not until we demonstrate to the world, through our gifts and selves, that we love Christ enough to carry out "His Great Comission" have we learned the grace of giving.

In our Church ^{service} ~~program~~ each Sabbath a place is given for the offering. Just as it was done in the temple where the widow contributed her two pennies. It is a place where we can help the weak, guide those who are erring and win men to Christ. It gives one the opportunity to render to God what is His. It speaks for the Missionaries home and abroad. It gives one the opportunity to test his relationship to God and the material things. As stewards let us accept our responsibility

and become partners of Jesus Christ to the "uttermost parts of the earth". Christ as in the case of the widow has made no bargains of cash consideration with us, but our generous offering exhibits our professional love.

The widow set forth the truth that no one can find an excuse for not showing ~~our~~^{his} stewardship to God financially. Peter tells us "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God! The true steward is the one who is devoted to Jesus our Lord.

Talking with a friend recently she told me that, the best way to have a clear conscience and not feel that you are cheating God financially is to practice the tithe. This sound ridiculous to some. For there are so many members in the church that do not believe in large giving. God only ask for 10 per cent of a persons income.

Why should we practice tithing? We should practice tithing because it is Scriptural. God request us to lay aside 10 per cent of our financial income for the work of His Kingdom. Tithing is spiritual, calling for ^{an} faith which is active. As it has been stated before tithing will make one a partner with God. This friend told me, that tithing gave her so much joy until she started giving more than a tenth. When a person does that which is required of him by God, it gives him a good conscience toward God and man. Tithing gives a Christian boldness in prayer. The Church can plan ahead if its members tithe.

The woman showed her love for God when she gave those two pennies. She might have been justified in withholding her offering. "What different could a penny make?" It is so small it will not count for much.