

Care for us Holy One, and help us see the goodness of your caring presence in our lives. Help us welcome you into our homes. Help us release toil and anxiety and find peace.

Welcome to worship at Decatur UMC where we are committed to creating hope by connecting you with the life changing love of Jesus. My hope for you today is that you find hope, connect with Jesus, and connect with someone else.

If you are worshipping with us online today, I want to say a special word of welcome. To help you better follow along and worship online, I want to invite you to follow the link in the video description and download our online worship bulletin. This will allow you to follow along with prayers, responsive reads, and our worship songs.

I want to invite you to share this video and invite others to worship with you. And if you are local around Decatur TN, I want to invite you to in-person worship next week at 11am.

Whether you are worshipping in-person or online, I want to encourage you to respond to God with giving generously to support the ministry of God at Decatur UMC. You can give online at [Decaturumc.com](http://Decaturumc.com) and we have a generosity box in the rear of the sanctuary where you and drop your tithes and offerings today.

Holy Communion today

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Parish Council Nov 7 @ 4:30

Charge Conference 6pm

Soulfest

CALL TO WORSHIP

Love the Lord your God.

**We love with all our heart.**

Love the Lord your God.

**We love with all our soul.**

Love the Lord your God.

**We love with all our mind.**

Love the Lord your God.

**We love with all our strength.**

OPENING PRAYER

Abiding and caring God, help us remember that you are present with us, calling us to be our best selves. Help us learn to love ourselves, that we might learn to love our neighbors. With the caring example of Christ, we seek to be your love and care in the world. Amen.

HYMN

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

UMH 384

APOSTLES CREED

PRAYER REQUESTS

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

## SERMON TITLE

We are in the second week of our message series on God's economy of abundance. We get this idea, looking at the world around us, that everything is based on scarcity. That for me to win, you have to lose. And for you to win, I have to lose. It's says there's not enough to go around, and that prices will rise until the demand for something is taken care of. While this is all around us, the economy of God is based on something different. God's economy is abused on abundance—there is always more than enough.

I'll confess that when I say things like this, sometimes it sounds like this is a nice thing for a preacher to say. Sometimes when I think about more than enough, it doesn't always compute when I look at my bank account or consider my budget.

Several weeks ago, I was having truck problems. Really for a while, I hope it's over, I was having some pretty bad luck on the whole vehicle front. Hope and I don't drive new cars, and we are ok with this. Her car is still really nice and my truck gets me where I need to go, and the best part is that we don't have a car payment. But a few weeks ago, I was sitting in the waiting room of a mechanic and I heard the news that I needed a part for my truck that was a little over \$2000—my heart sunk.

While we basically have an emergency fund to cover this type of expense, I knew that if I had to make this significant repair that it would mean that the money would have to come from somewhere else. I realize that even in this misfortune, that I am incredibly fortunate because I didn't have to worry if I could make the repair or not. But still \$2000 is a lot of money; I'd have to pull it from somewhere, and it was hard to pay that bill on top of the other repairs we have had to do recently.

The truth is money is a part of life and so much of what we have in life has to deal with money and how we deal with money. Regardless of if you have a lot of money or not as much as someone else, how you deal with your finances is important and has a big impact on your faith. The way you spend the money you have shows what you value.

When people used to keep a checkbook, the preacher might get up and say, show me your checkbook and I'll tell you what you value. We spend money on the things we value. We invest our money in the things we value. While I don't keep a checkbook, this same thing can be said about my credit card statement – netfilx, amazon, Wall-mart, Netflix, amazon, Walmart. When I pay off my credit card every month, I survey my expenses, and I have to admit, sometimes I'm not happy with what I find. Sometimes I find that I've spend too much money in things I shouldn't have or invested my time and resources in ventures that are rather selfish.

Today we are talking about money, and what money can look like in the economy of God's abundance. We are talking about what it can mean to invest your wisely on behalf of the mission of God. The difference it can make in your life and the lives of others when you give generously and abundantly to the ministry of God. And to do this, I want to share with you our scripture passage from Mark 12. It is likely that for many of you this is a passage of scripture that is familiar to you. Even though it may be familiar, I think that it might also contain something new for us to consider as we reflect on what and how we give to God.

Before I share our scripture passage, though, I want to take a brief moment and talk about one of the terms we use when we discuss money in the church. If you grew up in church, you might have heard a time or two about tithing. Tithing is a biblical concept of giving 10 percent of your income to God through the church. This is a spiritual practice; it's something I do and it's something that I think is important.

I also want to say that if you are not giving at least 10 percent of your income, you are not tithing. I don't say this to guilt you, but I do think the tithe is a worthy spiritual goal. In fact, in faith, we are called to give the tithe then give offerings on top of the tithe. So when we mention tithes and offerings in worship, this is what we are talking about.

Now, Let's take a look at Mark 12:38-44

#### SCRIPTURE TEXT

*38 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. 39 They long for places of honor in the synagogues and at banquets. 40 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."*

*41 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. 42 One poor widow came forward and put in two small copper coins worth a penny. 43 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. 44 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."*

#### SERMON TITLE

In this story, Jesus is hanging out in the temple with his disciples and he contrasts the giving of the scribes, the legal experts, the important religious people of the day and the giving of this widow. I imagine him sitting in the church, and observing what's going on and pointing things out to the disciples. I kind of think of him sitting in the back, in the peanut gallery so to speak, sharing a commentary on what's happen and what, perhaps, should happen.

When we immediately read this story, it's easy to assume and get in the same position of Jesus, observing what's going on and trying to make the best life decisions. It's easy to imagine that we are in the position of Jesus and just kind of being an observer on the wall. It's easy to imagine ourselves in the position of the Jesus and judge the actions of the legal experts who only give a proportionately small part of their resources back to God. And even praising the widow for giving her small but mighty gift. But what if, instead, we changed our focal point.

What if, instead we imagine ourselves in the story, not as those observing the poor widow, but as the two small copper coins.

SLIDE CHANGE -- COINS

What if we see ourselves, not as an observer, but instead as the coins, the offering itself.

These two copper coins aren't worth much in the grand scheme of things. Often this is referred to as the "widow's mite." This coin was likely a lepton, which was a small Jewish coin used during the time. When this story was written down, the coin had a value of approximately  $1/64^{\text{th}}$  of a denarius. And a denarius was worth about a day's wage. It's hard to get a 1 to 1 comparison in today's dollars because the wage earned doesn't take into account buying power and other complex factors.

However, it's estimated that in the US in September the average hourly wage was \$11.25. So if you figure an 8 hour day, that's \$90. And then if you take  $1/64^{\text{th}}$  of that day's wage, you get \$1.41. And from what I understand, this is actually overvaluing the purchasing power of the coin. But to put this into perspective, a coffee at McDonalds with sales tax, cost \$1.41. So  $1/64^{\text{th}}$  of the average daily wage in the US is a cup of McDonalds Coffee. And that's what this lady puts in the offering plate. 1 cup of coffee.

And Jesus said,

#### SCRIPTURE TEXT

*“I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than everyone who’s been putting money in the treasury.”*

The truth is, these coins represent more than just money or a cup of coffee. They represent faith and belief and how faith must be lived out in our lives in concrete acts giving. Giving of our selves. These coins represent “everything she had” —everything the woman had is found in these two coins. It’s not just a cup of coffee; it’s the gift of everything. The gift of everything is profound. The coins represent a faith-filled offering found in presenting all of who we are and all we hope to become to God for service in the world. This offering—says everything I have, I lay it down.

#### SERMON TITLE

Indeed, offering in this sense is something other than just a part of worship service. Or something you do when you feel the need or feel guilty. The offering, the everything isn’t even so much the act of giving itself. Instead, the offering, as Jesus is teaching it, is the very act of being.

A leader of the faith in his own time and someone’s whose writings are still studied to, Bishop Augustine of North Africa, taught that our duty is to offer ourselves—all of who we are—to God. Augustine told us that this is what we are supposed to do in communion. To present all of ourselves to God in the communion meal—we will do that later in service today.

What if, rather than confining Augustine's compelling charge to present all of who we are to God, what if we open it up to our whole lives. How can we take the grace and hope that we find in the wine and bread, and pour it out in our whole lives in a way that not only sustains us, but creates a model of offering for others. And what if this model of offering, of offering our whole selves shows others what enormous power there is in offering our whole selves.

This is not something that we can do at arms length. I love online giving, but giving of everything you have is not something you can do at arms length. If we imagine ourselves and become the offering, those two small copper coins, we much live our lives in such a way that our offering is truly shared with others.

I remember as a child my dad, who is an attorney, telling me that the only thing he had to sell was his time. Of course, I didn't know what that meant as a child or how much lawyers billed per hour. But when it comes to faith, I think there is something to that. We are given 24 hours in a day. Everyone has the same time, enough time, and it is up to you to live a faithful life with the time you are given. It is up to you to use the time that you have to offer your *self*, more than enough, in service to God. And this offering of yourself, to truly live into this, involves giving financially to God. It involves offering all your finances back to God, all of your time, all of your being.

I realize that a lot of this doesn't make much sense. It's impractical, I guess, to give everything. But offering, giving is so vital to living a life of faith, a life of abundance of God. I will tell you, that giving to charity is often more glamorous than giving to the ministry of the church. I've worked in fundraising before, and the campaigns we ran were slicker and raised more money than most churches do.



But what if, as a thought experiment, you really gave everything you had? What if we gave everything we had as a people of faith? The monetary nature of this is important for the continuance of ministry for our church (and every church), but it's also than that, more than just finances. What if you and I really gave everything we had to the ministry of God in this place?

If you do this, if I do this, we would really begin seeing and living in God's economy of abundance. Truth be told, Jesus is the only other one that we know, besides the widow in our story, that gave everything. In the model of the world, when someone gives everything, we would consider them to have lost, maybe we would say that they were generous to a fault. But When Jesus gave everything, he didn't do so by the model of scarcity in the world. Instead, when Jesus gave everything, he also gained everything.

When Jesus gave everything, he gained, for you and for me, eternal life and the kingdom of heaven. Imagine, what God can do through the ministry of the church if you and I were to live lives of giving everything we have.

You may be listening to this, and at this point say, yea that's impossible. There's no way I can do that. But I also want to challenge you on that. Because everything is possible with God. And it doesn't have to happen all at once. Instead, the path to giving everything can happen one step at a time. But the important piece, is that you take a step. Give a little more of your life over to God. Look at your finances and say how can I start giving more to God? What can I do to increase the percentage of my income that I give to God? What can I do to live a life that is truly and fully an offering to the Lord.

PRAYER

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

## CONFESSION

**O God, we have not invested all that we are— our hearts, minds, soul, and strength— in loving you. And each day, we struggle to love one another to the fullest. Receive our heartfelt confession, and hear our gratitude for your grace and forgiveness. Amen.**

As people full of forgiveness and seeking to live lives where we fully give everything to God. Let us sing a song of prayer.

HYMN

Take My Life, and Let it Be

UMH 399

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Blessed are you, our Alpha and our Omega,  
whose strong and loving arms encompass the universe,  
for with your eternal Word and Holy Spirit you are forever one God.  
Through your Word you created all things and called them good,  
and in you we live and move and have our being.

When we fell into sin, you did not desert us.

You made covenant with your people Israel  
and spoke through prophets and teachers.

In Jesus Christ your Word became flesh and dwelt among us,  
full of grace and truth.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the  
highest.**

*The pastor may raise hands.*

Holy are you, and blessed is Jesus Christ, who called you Abba, Father.  
As a mother tenderly gathers her children,  
you embraced a people as your own  
and filled them with a longing for a peace that would last  
and for a justice that would never fail.  
In Jesus' suffering and death you took upon yourself our sin and death  
and destroyed their power for ever.  
You raised from the dead this same Jesus,  
who now reigns with you in glory,  
and poured upon us your Holy Spirit,  
making us the people of your new covenant.

*The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread, or touch the  
bread, or lift the bread.*

On the night before meeting with death, Jesus took bread,  
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to the disciples, and said:  
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me."

*The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the cup, or touch the cup,  
or lift the cup.*

When the supper was over Jesus took the cup,  
gave thanks to you, gave it to the disciples, and said:  
"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

*The pastor may raise hands.*

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,  
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving  
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

*The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread and cup.*

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts,  
that in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this wine  
we may know the presence of the living Christ  
and be renewed as the body of Christ for the world,  
redeemed by Christ's blood.

*The pastor may raise hands.*

As the grain and grapes, once dispersed in the fields,  
are now united on this table in bread and wine,  
so may we and all your people be gathered from every time and place  
into the unity of your eternal household  
and feast at your table for ever.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and for ever. Amen.

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

### BENEDICTION

Go out in love to care for strangers. Go out in love to care for kin. Go out in love to care for neighbors. Go out in love to care for yourselves, beloved of God. Amen.