

*He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*

*Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. - 2Corinthians 9:6-8, 10-11*

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHRIST

The following summarises the Christian vision of contributions of money in the name of Christ:

- **Contributions must be made.** By sharing that with which we have been blessed, we share a part of ourselves with others while recognising Christ within “the least of our brethren.” Our gifts are not “charity” or “leftovers.” Instead, they are a vital part of the Christian life.
- **They must be made in secret.** They must be made as a sacrifice, from our own poverty rather than from our abundance. There is no sacrifice if we give our “leftovers” or if we seek recognition by others.

- **Our gifts must be given cheerfully.** They must not be advertised. They must be given freely, not under compulsion or as an “obligation.”

In giving, we should have complete detachment as our goal - total freedom from captivity to worldly preoccupations with perfect poverty as the goal of personal perfection. Then - *and only then* - will our treasure be great in the Kingdom of God.

**Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.**

*- Luke 6:38*

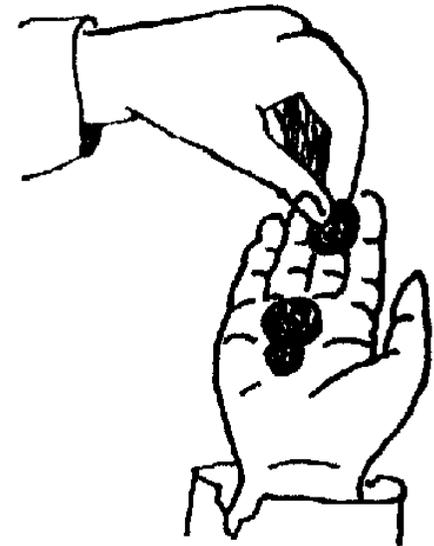
**...Send your treasures to the heavenly storage room. Deposit your wealth in God’s Bank, distributing it to the poor, the orphans and the widows, so that you can receive a million times more in the Second coming of Christ...**

*- Elder Joseph the Hesychast*

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# ALMSGIVING



## ALMSGIVING

Together with prayer and fasting, Christ teaches us that *almsgiving* is one of the three fundamental attributes of the spiritual life.

*Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.* - Matthew 6:2-4

### A SPIRITUAL MEANING

Sometimes Christians are embarrassed at the mere mention of money, particularly in the Church. Many feel that a distinction should be maintained between “spiritual” and “temporal” matters. Such distinctions are, at best, false distinctions. The false spirituality which reduces the very mention of money to a purely temporal matter helps to explain why the spirituality of money is often lost in the Church and in the world and why so many un-Christian and anti-Christian practices relative to money have entered into the life of the Church itself.

Christ spoke extensively about money. In fact, He put it in the forefront of spiritual life, giving it a deep and important spiritual meaning. While Christ never condemned the use of money, He did not speak out against its *abuse*.

Material wealth, like anything else, can easily become a devious pre-occupation, an obsession which is sinful precisely because it overlooks the fact that all we possess is ultimately a gift from God.

### PERFECTION THROUGH POVERTY

The Old Testament Law of Moses required a person to give ten percent of his or her goods to the Lord. This is the famous rule of *tithing*. In the New Testament, however, ten percent is seen as the minimum, not the norm; Christ requires a person to offer *everything!*

The poverty of total non-possession is the Christian perfection.

*If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.* - Matthew 19:21

Christ blessed the poor; He preached the Gospel to the poor. Christians are called not only to *help* the poor, but to *be* the poor - to be totally freed and detached from the things which “rust corrodes and moths consume and thieves steal” - the riches which bar humanity’s entry into the Kingdom of God.



## SECRET SACRIFICE

When we offer gifts of money - to others, to the poor and the needy, to the Church for its ongoing work of proclaiming the Good News of Christ - we must do so *secretly* and *sacrificially*. The Gospel clearly demonstrates Christ’s insistence on these two principles.

*Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”*

- Mark 12:41-44

### THE CHEERFUL GIVER

The New Testament epistles are filled with suggestions concerning the proper attitude toward and the Christian use of money. The disciples taught and did what Christ Himself taught and did, and they expect us to follow their example.

The apostles collected money for their own work in proclaiming the Gospel. They emphasised that gifts of money and possessions were indeed a part of the Christian life. They begged all to follow this principle: