



SERMON PLANNING GUIDE

Guide developed by
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Biblical commentary by guest contributors,
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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We hope this guide is your starting point for shaping your sermons, worship services, and scripture study classes. For each week of the stewardship series, we have included biblical commentary, theme connections, guiding questions for text study, and links to further reading. For each text, we've included suggestions for how to connect the scripture to the theme, *Our Money Story*. These suggestions offer a few ways of approaching and thinking about the texts in light of our theme.

You may wish to include our [Artist Statements](#) (included with the visuals in the *Our Money Story* bundle) in your scripture research and reflections. Refer to the [Our Money Story Theme Infographic](#) for more information about the theme. Consider mapping out your ideas in our accompanying [Sermon Planning Grid](#).

ABOUT OUR MONEY STORY THEME

We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. Perhaps we are living from a story of fear or shame. Or a story that the church is dying and no longer relevant. Or a story that our actions won't have an impact. Or a story that we don't have enough. Where might God be speaking a new narrative into the limited ones we have told ourselves? This theme invites us to discover and tell our money stories in light of God's money story of liberation and justice. This series encourages us to transform our stewardship practices into more full expressions of who we are and what we believe.

This theme is intentionally direct—it invites us to name exactly what we're talking about and not skirt around it. To speak of money is to invite tension into the room. We so quickly want to avoid it. But it's time we reframe this. Money and possessions are one of the most common topics in scripture, and Jesus talked about money more than faith and prayer. Our money story, therefore, is a spiritual story. Thinking about God's money story should be liberating, inviting, and transformative.

This stewardship season, we invite you to remember, release, reimagine, and restore your money stories so that we can write the one God is begging us to live into.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR EACH SCRIPTURE TEXT

- What is the money story of this scripture?
- What are the money stories of the characters in the text?
- What does this text teach us about God's money story?

COMMENTARY ON MARK 12:38–44

According to Luke Timothy Johnson, “Before the destruction of the temple, [the treasury] was the method used to fulfill the demands of Torah for the collection of alms for those perennially dispossessed...namely widows.”⁶ By giving to the treasury, the rich were fulfilling their responsibilities...so that the widow did not have to. In fact, widows were not required to give to the temple.

Widows and the perennially dispossessed were to be cared for through safety nets that were created, yet the systems weren't working and needed reimagining. This widow gives all that she has and the system fails her. What would it mean if Jesus tells this story to use her act of giving as a way to highlight the corruption of the economic system in power? What if Jesus tells this story to show us, in contrast, a new—and yet ancient—way of sharing, distributing resources, and caring for people?

How can we reimagine systems of charity that inevitably fail to honor and uplift, that fail to provide true transformation and liberation? How can we reimagine how we earn and how we distribute resources as faith communities? How can we collectively come closer to Jesus and model as faith communities a new economy while being intrinsically connected to the economy that we are living in? How can our giving, and our receiving, be reimagined?

—Rev. Mieke Vandersall

THEME CONNECTIONS

- We can reimagine an economy where practices of predatory lending, student debt, medical debt, and wage inequity are upended
- We can reimagine an economy where the perennially dispossessed are cared for
- We can reimagine the identity of neighbor, regardless of geographic location, as child of God
- We can reimagine how our faith communities now can engage in cyclical years of Jubilee
- We can reimagine a relationship with money where it is used to repair rather than provide security/sustainability to institutions

QUOTES & RESOURCES FOR INSPIRATION

“It is extremely important, then, to focus preaching on the widow's gesture in light of the elements that point to an unfocused and abusive religious system. In this way we can denounce leaders who demand high sums of money from their parishioners as offerings and mock—openly or privately—the humble offerings of those who have the least. At the same time, we can denounce the religious structures that welcome the most impoverished congregations' two coins — mostly made up of minorities — but do not see or pretend not to see their need. Praising the woman's act of devotion without denouncing the aforementioned ills is a way of being complicit in these abuses.”

—Hernández-Marcial, Lydia. “Comentario del San Marcos 12:38-44.” WorkingPreacher. Translated by Google Chrome. Translation revised by Anna Strickland. November 11, 2018. https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3889.

Two Copper Coins. The Work of the People. Video, 2:09. <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/two-copper-coins>

⁶ Johnson, Luke Timothy. “The Life of Faith and the Faithful Use of Possessions.” (Indiana: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2006).3. <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/doc/institutes/lake-lecture-johnson-2006.pdf>

QUOTES & RESOURCES FOR INSPIRATION (continued)

“Eventually, this coronavirus-induced year of jubilee will come to an end. Credit card companies will charge interest again. Libraries will impose late fees. Prisons will be full once more. The land will be worked and overworked. But the church—along with its peculiar practice of jubilee—will remain. It will bear witness to a greater and perpetual jubilee inaugurated by Jesus. And, in its odd and ordinary ways, it will bear witness to a world yearning for jubilee.”

—Sutton, A. Trevor. “From prison releases to loan forgiveness, a glimpse of jubilee.” *Sojourners*. April 9, 2020. <https://sojo.net/articles/prison-releases-loan-forgiveness-glimpse-jubilee>.

“Sabbath is not simply a pause in time, but a way of reimagining life. Rather than being driven by consumerism and consumption, the Sabbath reminds us that we are called to a life of solidarity and compassion. It is through the practice of the Sabbath that we can finally experience the reality of abundance, acknowledging that there is more than enough. For the Israelites then, and for us today, the Sabbath is a call to remember the work of God in our lives, to resist the spirit of consumption, and to reimagine our community with eyes of justice, equality, and thankfulness.”

—Kerr, Amanda. “Sabbath: Resist, Remember, Reimagine.” Sermon, First Christian Church, Greensboro, NC. November 6, 2016. <https://fccgreensboro.org/sermon/sabbath-resist-remember-reimagine/>



JUBILEE
BY LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN
INSPIRED BY LEV. 19:9-10; 25:8-12



LAMENT OF A GIFT
BY HANNAH GARRITY
INSPIRED BY MARK 12:38-44