

“Letting Go”  
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Mark 12: 38-44  
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Back in 1999 there was an article in *Forbes Magazine* titled, “Letting Go” by Adam Penenberg.<sup>1</sup> In the article he talked of a new robot dog named “Grrr”. The robot dog could wag its tail, distinguish between blue and green, respond to commands such as “get food” and so forth. What was even more impressive is that “Grrr” was made up almost entirely of Lego building blocks.

The problem was that “Grrr” did not come from Lego’s Mindstorm Division which had developed the programmable robot sets. Instead “Grrr” was an invention of the Open Source Movement. According to the article, *“The Open Source movement is a loose confederation of programmers who tinker with software source code, add to it and share their contributions with the world.”*<sup>2</sup>

Grrr came about from three graduate students at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. The problem was that the Lego code was unraveled and then posted on the Web without Lego’s permission. In such cases most corporations sue.

Lego, however, decided not to sue but to see how this idea of free exchange would work. The result of this free exchange was the

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<sup>1</sup> “Letting Go of Lego”, Adam L. Penenberg, *Forbes Magazine*, found at [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com), August 9, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> ibid.

development of a miniature photo copier, a coin sorter, a light sensor and other gadgets. Other projects spawned by the open attitude of Lego were a bar-code reader and an airborne vehicle to track animals and in 2006 a mechanical arm to replace limbs lost in Iraq.

Now what does all this have to do with a woman in Jerusalem who dropped two coins into an offering plate?

-1-

Jesus is in Jerusalem and it is the last week of his life. He is in the Temple in an area known as the Court of Women. In this court there were thirteen large metal, trumpet shaped receptacles for offerings. These receptacles were in plain view. In addition coins dropped into the receptacles made a loud and distinctive sound. The receptacles were designed to attract attention especially if you were dropping in a LARGE NUMBER OF COINS.

Larry Paul Jones writes in his book, Joyful Giving about this scene---as he imagines it.<sup>3</sup> He imagines wealthy merchants, religious leaders, political leaders, and others spending hours getting ready for the trip to the Temple. Their money bags were ornate and bulging so that everyone would notice. They would approach the receptacles and one by one drop their coins in. They would make the most noise possible to attract the most attention possible.

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<sup>3</sup> Jones, Larry Paul, Joyful Giving (Chalice Press), p. 150.

In contrast was a poor widow. Her offering hardly made a sound. She dropped in two SMALL coins. These two coins, however, were worth about ten percent of a day's wages. Jesus noticed her and used her as an example of stewardship.

*“Jesus called his disciples over and said; ‘The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they’ll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she could not afford—she gave her all.’”<sup>4</sup>*

-2-

That is not the way we react is it? We honor the persons who give the most even it is not sacrificial giving. Very often when we give large amounts to a project we expect or demand recognition for the gift. Sometimes we expect control and influence from our giving so that our giving becomes another way of exerting power and control.

Jesus talked about “LETTING GO”. Jesus said things like those who seek to save their lives will lose them but those who lose their lives will find them----LETTING GO.

In the gospel of Mark there is a story of a rich man who comes to Jesus asking how he could reach the Kingdom of God. When Jesus tells him to sell all and give it to the poor he is unable to LET GO.

In the Letter, Acts of the Apostles we often quote the second chapter about the early Christians. We talk about how they met together

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<sup>4</sup> Peterson, Eugene, The Message, p.1836.

for fellowship, for prayers, for study, and for sharing a meal. What we often overlook is that the early Christians were communal and sold their possessions and placed the profits into a common fund. They LET GO.

-3-

As you know “letting go” is hard to do. The world teaches us to “hang on” and “take charge”. We fight great battles over ownership and control. Yet, is anything really ours? Who walked upon this land before us and who will walk upon this land after us?

Today is Stewardship Sunday. It is also a time when we begin a journey exploring our gifts and being invited to use our gifts for the Kingdom of God. Over the next several weeks each of us—children, youth, and adults----will have an opportunity during the Sunday school time to learn and explore the gifts that we have in our lives. Stewardship is about using our gifts---all our gifts-----for God and others. It is in reality a call to love and a call to step out in faith.

The theme for this Stewardship campaign has been “Imagine”. We are challenged to “imagine” what the world, or our community, or our church could be like if we could let go and trust God’s spirit.