

## SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

Things had come to a pretty pass in Jerusalem. Joash (or Jehoash) began to reign when he was seven years old and consequently other hands guided the ship of state until he reached mature years. As he grew, Joash discerned that all was not well in his kingdom. Someone was playing fast and loose with the royal coffers, and particularly with the money given to repair the temple. After he had been on the throne for twenty-three years (and hence he was now thirty), Joash took a long stern look at the temple in his capital city. This glorious building had been neglected shamefully, and the money given for its repair had been finding its way into the pockets of the priests, the very people who should have seen to it that the building was kept in shining condition.

Alarmed at what he saw, and suspecting strongly what was afoot, Joash called in the old High Priest, Jehoiada, and gave him certain instructions. Briefly these were: the priests were not to collect money for the repairs to the temple; instead, at the king's direction, Jehoiada was to build a large chest and bore a hole in the lid and set the chest with the hole in the lid beside the altar; into this was to go all the money that the people brought to the temple. This money was of three kinds: "the dedicated things" (that is, from the people who had made vows or wished to give thank-offerings); "the money of everyone that passeth the account" (which was a kind of capitation tax, amounting to half a shekel, and which was to be paid by all, whether rich or poor for the upkeep of the temple, as decreed by Moses); and "the money that cometh into any man's heart" (which we would describe as free-will offerings).

So the king and his High Priest had the mammoth money-box set in position and they settled back to observe the operation of the scheme. Nor did they have long to wait. Soon the box was full, and they had it counted (under supervision, one would guess, and certainly not by the priests who had previously channelled it into their own purses) and put into bags, and then paid directly to the carpenters and stone masons and all those who had wrought with a cunning hand to restore the temple to its former glory.

Thus was the king's idea an unqualified success. And I suggest that all those housewives who budget their house-keeping money, and all those who have a tin or a money box where they secretly slip a little away "for a rainy day," owe a debt of gratitude to Joash for his practical idea which brought out of economic chaos, financial order and monetary stability.

Joash's idea, has caught on since that time. Some homes have a veritable battery of bottles into which money goes each week for all kinds of things - rent, power, gas, housekeeping, refurnishings, etc. But so many, while they do this with meticulous care, quite neglect the most important of all. They subscribe to the systematic budgeting for household necessities and they religiously set aside money for luxuries, but when it comes to giving to God, they toss Him their loose, change, if they have any, or they make an offering of what surplus they might chance to have.

We insult the Almighty when we treat Him in such a cavalier fashion. From Him we have everything that is good and pleasant and lovely. From His bounteous hand we receive a thousand temporal blessings. Has He no claim to more than a chance gift, a fortuitous

donation, not from what we might have to spare, but from the bounties with which He has so freely endowed us? Is it not our reasonable service to include Him in our budgeting?  
A keen observer with a poetic flair has set it down so well -

She bought a dress, new, each week - nice ones, too, at that  
Then gave a dollar to her church when the usher passed the hat.  
He gave ten cents for offering, then spent fifty cents on gum,  
Then bowed his head and prayed, "O Lord, Thy kingdom come."  
They sat at home and wondered why they so slow progress,  
He chewed his gum and couldn't tell; she, puzzled, wore her dress.  
She knew the Lord was coming -she heard the preachers say,  
But somehow she forgot this when the ushers passed her way.  
Of course, the Lord was looking on and heard them when they prayed:  
"We'll plan a generous gift, O Lord, when all our bills are paid."  
And so they sit at home and wonder why they so slow progress;  
He chews his gum and cannot tell; she, puzzled, wears her dress.

Of course, our offering to God is not restricted to money. The greatest of offerings we can give to our Lord is our life, our obedience and our service. Do we do "all to the glory of God"?

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