

Title: The Widow's Mite

Theme: Jesus watches what we give, for it indicates the condition of our hearts

Video URL: https://youtu.be/87gHPIkPV-g?si=rzjaSzM_S0DtlxEV

Today's Gospel teaches a significant lesson from a seemingly insignificant person. As the narrative opens, Jesus sits opposite the treasury, watching the multitude putting money into the offering box. He is watching what people give, not because he is nosy or doesn't have good manners, but because he is concerned about the condition of human hearts, and the temple treasury was as good a place as any to discern that condition. His observation brings to our attention many rich people giving lots of money. Then, He sees a poor widow come and place two small copper coins worth only a tiny amount of money into the treasury. In monetary terms, it seemed insignificant compared to the large amount the rich were able to give. Still, the story provides a valuable lesson on how the tiniest contribution can be significant in the eyes of God if the giver's devotion and sacrifice are heartfelt.

The widow also demonstrated great faith by holding nothing back. We know from the Old Testament that "The eyes of Yahweh move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is wholly devoted to Him."¹ Our God is still looking down from heaven to see if we, too, might demonstrate a faith that works by love in matters relating to the stewardship of our time, talent, and resources.

The story also contains fascinating details, which add to the comparison and contrasts it sets up. The treasury receptacles were made of metal and shaped like a trumpet. They didn't have paper

¹ 2 Chronicles 16:9

money back then, just coins. Bigger coins meant larger denominations of value. Coins would make noise when they were thrown into the receptacle. More significantly, heavier coins made more noise than smaller, lighter ones. The more coins were thrown in, the more noise was made. So, the rich would make sure the noise was heard, and the people, especially the priests, would notice and be impressed.

But Jesus is impressed with something no one else would notice, especially since the only thing she had was worth only a fraction of what others gave, except one thing. Mark's and Luke's Gospels mention that she gave everything, "***All she had to live on.***"² She left herself with no means, which put her in a position where she had to rely totally on God. The word that stands out in this sentence is the word "**all**." In Greek, the word means: "**the whole of all she had. It's a word that denotes completeness, without division or lacking any part.**"³ It is the same word used in the First and Great commandment, where Jesus said, "***You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.***"⁴ Therefore, the connection we need to make between the widow's offering and the first and greatest commandment is the love that her giving demonstrated. It is love that makes all the difference between her offering and the offerings of the rich. In his 1st letter to the Corinthians, Paul said it best when he wrote, "***And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.***"⁵ For this reason, Jesus said, "***Truly, I***

² Mark 12:44

³ Strong Concordance, #3650 "holos"

⁴ Matthew 22:37

⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:3

say to you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.”⁶

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”⁷ Jesus said this because whatever we treasure will inevitably capture our hearts and guide our actions. At its core, stewardship challenges each of us to evaluate the focus of our hearts. Are we grateful, and do we see ourselves as using God’s gifts in a way that brings honor to him? Or are we investing our time, talent, and treasure in temporary things without eternal value?

The context of our Gospel reveals another more searching question, set up by the comparison and contrast between the religious scribes who look great on the outside with their long robes and with emblems of their spiritual achievements tacked on their sleeves compared to this poor widow, who may not look like much on the outside but had a heart of gold on the inside. Her pure and sincere devotion is an example to us all.

But I can also say that your church’s leadership has also been an example. When our church received \$120,000.00 for the road expansion in front of the church, they immediately dedicated 100% of all future interest from that money to those in need. As a church, we, too, may not look like much on the outside, but on the inside, this is a place where heartfelt worship and concern for the needs of others are thoughtfully considered and demonstrated.

Secondly, this church has never been one that has pressured people for money. Like the poor widow, we are trusting God for our future needs.

⁶ Mark 12:43

⁷ Matthew 6:21

Our New Testament lesson from 1 Corinthians tells us about the attitude we should have when we give. Paul wrote, “*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*”⁸ This verse tells us that we should not give “grudgingly.”⁹ This word means that there should be no sorrow, reluctance, or regret in one’s giving. Nor should one give “*under compulsion.*”¹⁰ Therefore, giving should not be manipulated by guilt or high-pressure tactics. This church has always enjoyed God’s gracious provision without having to lay heavy burdens on people. Instead, it has relied on God’s enabling grace “*in all things at all times,*”¹¹ for “*God has supplied all of our needs, according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.*”¹²

Our reliance on God for the future of this church holds firm. We are confident that “*He who has begun good work in you will bring it to completion.*”¹³ I may not know what the future holds for this church, but I can trust that “*God has plans of good and not evil,*”¹⁴ for He is the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, who has promised to lead you (and me) in and out to green pastures and beside the still waters. Therefore, we will not fear, for he will restore our soul and lead us into the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. *Amen.*

⁸ 1 Corinthians 9:7

⁹ Taken from 2 Corinthians 9:7

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 9:8

¹² Philippians 4:19-20

¹³ Philippians 1:6

¹⁴ Jeremiah 29:11