

## The Widow's Mite

[Psalm 127](#), [Mark 12:38-44](#)

Today's gospel lesson may be familiar to you. Many have told the story of the widow giving all she had to the church. We see Jesus commending her for giving more than anyone else as she gave all she had out of her poverty while others gave out of their abundance.

There is a lot going on in this story. It holds a message about stewardship. It holds a message about faith. It also holds a message of injustice. That may sound odd, doesn't it? Maybe we can explore the messages of stewardship and of faith, but what about the message of injustice? I'm thinking we start at the beginning of this passage.

Jesus begins by teaching to beware of the scribes. Hmm. The scribes are one group of the church leaders in Jesus' time. Why should anyone beware of them? History tells us of the

considerable corruption in the church system of the day. We are used to a policy of a separation of church and state, but that was most certainly not the case in Jesus' day. The church maintained considerable power even under Roman rule.

However; at every turn, the leaders of the system were known to gouge the poor by charging extra fees for conducting proper sacrifices. The Temple was the place to go for Jews who wanted to follow the law as descendants of the Israelites. Yet the poor would have to pass through several layers of bureaucracy and taxes to pay homage to God.

The entire system was corrupt, and Jesus spoke out against it. Perhaps we can see why many had a problem believing Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus was constantly reminding everyone of the foundations of the law that many had forgotten. The primary charge given to the Jewish people was to honor God and care for

the less fortunate. Widows and orphans were at the top of the list of those who need care and protection. It was not important to be seen in long robes, sitting in places of honor and reciting long, elaborate prayers. God cares about what is in our hearts.

We see Jesus sitting outside the treasury while all those visiting the Temple were coming to pay their alms. And Jesus sees this poor widow who literally has nothing left after giving all she had to God. Jesus commends her for giving more than anyone else who gave out of their abundance. Here we see Jesus' message of stewardship and faith. It is a well known fact that charitable giving was at its highest in our own country during the Great Depression, when people had the least to give. Jesus recognized this woman had the least to give, yet she gave just the same. Jesus seems to be emphasizing our faith, not our wealth.

Maybe you've heard the saying, "Give 'til it hurts!" God does teach us to be good stewards of what we have. That includes our wealth, our possessions, and our resources. We should not be careless with the gifts we have been given, even in our abundance. The basic idea seems to be for us to give a portion of what we have to God up front. It may be tempting for us to want to hold off and give after we have paid all the bills – we can just give God what is left over. I know for me that has been a temptation. I remember when our children were young, and the prices for things like diapers and formula were outrageous, it was extremely hard to give to God when we could not see that we had enough money to take care of what was in front of us – our family. I would worry about not having enough, yet somehow we were ok. Maybe you have struggled with this as well. It can be hard to step out on faith and trust God to provide for our needs.

For a time, I had actually stepped away from my faith and was not giving to God at all of anything – my money, my time, or my talents. Yet through that time I felt something was off. I think deep down I knew what it was – God was calling me back to a closer relationship in every way. God will provide for our needs. Jesus commends this widow for her faith in giving all she had to God and trusting God to provide for her.

Some would call her actions foolish. If we put ourselves back in Jesus' time, taxes to Rome and tithes to the church could easily bankrupt the poor. This woman was a widow. Most likely she had no male family member to care for her which left her destitute. Her two coins were worth so little, yet she did not withhold anything for herself. She gave all she had to God. Jesus was commending this woman for giving out of her poverty

while at the same time he was denouncing the corrupt Temple system.

So what do we do with this story? What can we get out of this? Perhaps we can take a look at what we can give to God. Is it our talents? All of us have talents, but perhaps we don't yet know what they are. Can we look to God to help us discern our gifts and talents so that we are able to give a portion back to God? Is it our time? Maybe you are able to give back a portion of your time to God by visiting our shut-ins or helping out at our community events. Is it our funds? John Wesley said it this way, "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can." It's a good thing to work hard – 'Make all you can.' If the recession has taught us anything it is to 'save all you can.' And as members of this body of Christ, 'give all you can' when you

can. There are many things we can do to share God's love with others outside our four walls.

Pastor Tim Zingale shares this modern parable: "Once upon a time, a pig and a chicken were walking down a village street. They came upon a church sign which was advertising a bazaar and breakfast which was going to be held in a few days. At the bottom of the sign the menu was given, it read 'Ham and eggs will be served from 6:30 to 8:00 am.' The chicken turned to the pig and said, "See!!' Even we can help the work of the church!!!" "Yes," said the pig, "but yours is only a contribution, mine is a SACRIFICE." Perhaps the greatest gift we can give is ourselves. God wants a relationship with God's people. God wants to share our burdens and walk with us on our faith journey.

Every journey begins with taking the first step – that leap of faith. I think that is the greatest message we can take from the story of the widow’s mite. She stepped out on faith and trusted God to meet her needs. As a church body, we are taking a lot of leaps of faith to better connect with our community. Will you take that next faithful step with us? Sometimes our biggest challenge is taking that first step. Let us truly put our trust in God to care for our needs. As members of this church, we have put our trust in God to be with us as we step forward and extend the hand of God’s grace to our community. We have taken a stand that we shall overcome through the power and strength of Almighty God. Halleluiah! God is with us! Let the church say ‘Amen!’