

Scripture: Mark 12:38-44

She Offered All She Had

Beloved in Christ, we see here two contrasting pictures. One, in verses 38-40; and the other, in verses 41-44. In the first, we see a picture of religious leaders, the scribes. They love to be seen, love the best seats in the synagogue and the best places at feast. They look pious, saying long prayers; yet devour widows houses.

In the other picture, we see a widow, a poor one at that, giving all from the heart to the Lord.

The first received a lot of praise; the other was hardly noticed. The first was outward show; the second was from the heart. The first Jesus condemns and the second He commends. Jesus commends the poor widow and her offering. From verses 41-44 we see

1. She is poor in the eyes of the world
2. She is rich toward God.

1. She is poor in the eyes of the world

The scene is a vivid one. Jesus and His disciples leave the main part of the temple and enter into the outer court of the temple. This area was called the women's court. The treasury; that is, the offering boxes were located there. Thirteen offering boxes shaped like trumpets were placed along the wall. Each offering box was designated for a specific cause.

We read in verse 41 that Jesus was sitting "*opposite the treasury and He saw how the people put money into the treasury.*" The word 'how' is significant here. Jesus was not only watching, but He was watching how the people put the money into the treasury. Jesus see the attitudes, the posturing, and more importantly, the heart.

Crowds of people were in the temple. It was the time of the special Jewish feast, the Passover. Jews from everywhere are entering and leaving the temple. What is clear is that from where Jesus was sitting, He could see what they were putting in the treasury and how they were putting it in.

Verse 41 says, "And many who were rich put in much." As the people went by, they needed to say what their donation was. Then the priest would designate which box it would go in. All this was spoken aloud and everyone would have been able to hear. Many of the rich were 'showy' in their giving and they would put in a lot of money, giving from their surplus.

For Jesus, being fully man and at the same time fully God, the hearts were as clear as looking through a window. He did not need to ask questions. He sees into the heart. He sees how we give – whether we give sparingly, grudgingly, or out of duty. He knows with what attitude we give – sparingly or generously. He sees whether or not we are giving Him our left overs, "seconds", or whether we give from the heart, "*for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

But then Jesus sees one poor widow coming into the temple (v.42). The focus of this passage is on her – not just a woman, but a widow, a poor widow, perhaps one of those exploited 'uncared for' widows. God in His Word commands the church to look after and show compassion to the helpless: the widow, the fatherless, the foreigner and the stranger among you (Deuteronomy 10:17-18). In James 1:27, we read, "*Pure and undefiled*

religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble. . .” Job describes the wicked who “do not good to the widow.”

We know how the religious leaders treated widows from verse 40. Widows are particularly vulnerable. The religious leaders devoured their houses. This one poor widow contributes two of the smallest coins. She *“threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.”* We might say, in today’s terms, this amounts to two pennies, which are no longer in circulation.

Her gift was nothing to take note of. While the rich kept on throwing more and more in. She threw hers in – and had no more to give. The word “one” shows she’s alone. She’s all by herself. She has no husband to provide for her. We don’t know her name. Should anyone care? Does anyone see her?

But she is not there for herself; she’s there for the Lord. True, her two small copper coins were worth no more than a fraction of a penny. And she gave ‘two’ mites. It mentions “two” because she could have kept one for herself and give the other to the Lord. But she gives both.

But what did it matter? What difference does it make? Whether one or two, the noise was so slight that one could hardly hear the sound (“clink”) when the two coins landed in the offering box. It could not even pay for one candle to light up the temple. She’s not one to cozy up to for giving extra money.

And, yet . . . there is One who goes take notice: the Lord Jesus, who is the glory and the fulfilment of the temple. Among the many crowds, Jesus takes notice of her, specifically.

In verses 43-44, He pulls His disciples toward Him and draws their attention to this one poor widow. He reveals to them the work of God’s grace in this one poor widow’s heart and life. It’s His teaching point to them and to us. Verse 43, *“Assuredly, I say to you”* Jesus says to His disciples, *“that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury...”* This brings us to our second point. Jesus reveals how

2. She is rich toward God (vv.43-44)

Take note again of Jesus’ words, *“this poor widow has put in more than all those who”* were throwing in their thousands and ten thousands of dollars!

What is Jesus saying here? One author says it this way: ‘The sound made by the two pennies’, though not heard by anyone else, ‘had reached the eternal palaces of heaven. This sound was a melody to which God and the angels listened with joy’ (Meester). These two copper coins were like sparking diamonds.

What made her offering so different from the others? Jesus points that out in verse 44, *“for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”* For Jesus, and here is the point, the value of a gift is not the amount given, but the cost to the giver. It cost her more, than it cost all the others.

This point is brought out later in the story of the woman in Mark 14:3-9, who gives an extravagant gift of very costly perfume, anointing Jesus head with it. The value of her gift was far greater than the two pennies of this one poor widow. But Jesus equally commends them both. Their generosity and sacrifice are the same, even if the amounts are not the same!

In the temple, others gave what they could spare, but the poor widow spared nothing. Others gave from their surplus, but she gave from her need, *"all she had to live on."*

The purpose of Jesus' teaching here is not that you give all your money away. Jesus' purpose is not that you be poor like this one poor widow because God loves poor people. Nor is the first purpose of this widow's selfless deed to show the difference between her genuine heart and the pretense of the scribes.

Verse 43 reveals that Jesus' primary purpose is to teach His disciples (us). Notice, Jesus summons the disciples. It's a lesson for us.

The sacrifice 'of all she had' reminds us of Jesus earlier call to His disciples, the fishermen by the sea, "to leave all" and "Come, follow Me." Now this woman lays down her whole life for Christ.

By the grace of God, we hold nothing back. No sacrifice, no cost is too great in following Jesus and the eternal life He gained for us through death and resurrection. If we are His disciples, we are willing to lay down our lives, surrendering all, as our way of showing our thanks to Jesus, God's Son. He laid down His life for our sins, taking upon Himself the punishment of God for our sin, declaring us righteous through faith Him, being adopted as children of God.

That's how much He loved us. He gave Himself for us and for our salvation!

Our heart of thanks and love for Christ shows in our giving to His church and for the building up of His kingdom, whether of money, time, or talent. The point is not giving your pennies to the Lord. For most of us, that costs us nothing. For the widow, though, this was her income to the temple. Though seemingly small and insignificant, her offering was transformed into a pearl of great price. She was rich toward God.

In worship, what do we do? We offer ourselves, our whole selves to the Lord in thanksgiving to Him. This is why we our offerings also belong to worship.

We see this in the Scripture. For example, the apostle Paul says to the church in Corinth, *"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper..."* It is part of worship. It's not just useful; it's a principle. God doesn't just want our pennies. He wants all of us. He wants our heart. And that shows in giving our first fruits to Him; that is, our first portion, or what Scripture call the tithe or 10% of our income (2 Chronicles 31:4-5).

The Bible says, *"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7). If we are not that kind of giver, this is something to ask Jesus for. This is something that He gives – a grateful heart. This Jesus commends! He gives the grace -that grace that we see in the heart and life of this one poor widow.

She gave all she had. She is one of the brightest lights in Jesus' ministry in the temple. The religious leaders were noisily resisting Him, but here you see a woman, quietly, without notice, offering herself with a grateful heart to the Lord.

In Ephesians 5, we read, *"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"* (Ephesians 5:1-2). Amen.