

The Poor Widow

Introduction: [Mark 12:41-44](#) And He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And He called His disciples to Him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

I was initially going to deliver a sermon from John 6 titled, "There's the Door," but considering Antonio and Michaela are leaving us this week, I decided that may not have been the most encouraging title, so I'm saving that one for next Sunday. You're welcome! :)

Why am I drawn to this passage? I've gravitated towards this passage for some time now, and I think I know why. It's more beautiful over time because you understand its value and application in life again and again. **What's more important for the moment is not that she catches my attention. She caught Jesus' attention, and that carries weight.** Now, this says something about Jesus as much as it does her. So, before turning our attention to this woman, let's consider what was happening in Jesus' life. The setting is difficult to ignore. Jesus observed this widow during the last week of His earthly ministry. Jewish leaders were at a breaking point. Jesus offensively returned to Jerusalem and cleared the temple. The Jewish leaders attempted to contradict Jesus in hopes of squashing His popularity and persuasion on the people, but it didn't work. The atmosphere was tense, and Jesus was around the corner from His betrayal, scourging, and crucifixion. How would you handle yourself if you were in Jesus' shoes? Though so much was happening, Jesus took the time to watch the people put money into the offering box. I've read that there were 13 collection chests in the temple. Jesus was in the court of women across from these 13 trumpet-shaped bronze receptacles. Apparently, "each box was for a different kind of offering, with labels telling what the money was for." (*"The Chronological Life of Christ"* by Mark E. Moore, pg. 533). You could imagine the sound as the rich threw in fistfuls of coins. The sound of coins hitting metal, making their way into the chest, would draw attention. I don't think it's a coincidence that Jesus just warned about the scribes in the previous verses. Consider verses [38-40](#). This passage also correlates with [Matthew 23](#), when Jesus rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees. Such individuals enjoyed being the center of attention and devoured widow's houses. We're not sure exactly how they did this, but don't miss the point. It's ironic how such leaders, such as the Pharisees, would profit off such women and then seek praise from their peers for being righteous in their giving. We see this today within religious institutions. We see those who take advantage of those who are barely scraping by, living paycheck to paycheck. "Donate, and we'll say a prayer for you." "Donate, and God will heal you." "Donate, and we'll mail you a small bottle of holy water." And on it goes. That's more obvious. Sometimes it's not so obvious. Yes, this woman must have been a breath of fresh air to Jesus. Jesus, one who was about to give His all, for all. Everyone would hear about Jesus, but who would pay attention to this woman? Again, **Jesus did.**

What did He see in her? He didn't see how little she gave. He noticed how little the rich gave. He realized how much they didn't give. Not with this woman. She gave all she had to live on. She had a "Philippian spirit" in her. You'll remember Paul's words to the church in Corinth concerning the brethren in Macedonia (which included Philippi): [2 Corinthians 8:1-5](#), "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."

- This isn't a lesson on giving and collecting, but let us remember [2 Corinthians 9:6-9](#): The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."
- The last portion is taken from [Psalm 112](#), and I'd like to read that with everyone. This isn't a lesson on giving and collecting, but let us remember 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; "the point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." The last portion is taken from [Psalm 112](#), and I'd like to read that with everyone. [Psalm 112](#) contrasts the blessing of God on His righteous people with the wicked. I believe Paul's usage of this passage refers to the giver, not God. However, all Israelites had learned such goodness from God. [Psalm 112](#) mirrors the righteousness of God discussed in the previous [Psalm 111](#). Here's the bottom line: the woman loved the Lord. Let's go out on a limb and say that she loved the Lord in such a manner because she saw that in Him first. Again, let's remember that He saw this woman on this day. What did He see? What was worth calling His disciples over?

A Godly Giver:

Do you think He saw a bit of Himself in her? What was Jesus about to do? Sacrifice. To what degree would He sacrifice? He would give it all. How did Israel as a whole view Jesus? The majority didn't think much of Him. The giving of His life would have no value to them. He was more of a nuisance than anything else. Just another body nailed to a cross to sort out after His death. Of course, to you and I, the death of Jesus means everything. It means everything because He gave everything. It cost Him everything. He felt it. It wasn't a safe or detached kind of sacrifice. It required love, devotion, and faith in God. This woman wasn't Jesus. She wasn't giving her life for others, but she gave like God. Does her giving not challenge you? Would you give everything you have? How much would you hold back? Why did she give everything she had? When is the last time you've given like this woman? I don't know why she

gave everything. I assume she felt God was worth it, though she couldn't offer much. She'd offer it all if it helped purchase a sacrifice offered to God. It was worth it. Perhaps she wasn't as nervous for herself as you are. Would you call her irresponsible? Maybe that's a safe answer because it protects our lack faith. Perhaps her faith is more excellent than ours. Maybe she saw excuse-making in those around her? One thing is true - when you compare her to the scribes and Pharisees, her righteousness exceeded them all. Isn't that what Jesus taught in [Matthew 5:20](#), "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

I find peace in this passage because of Jesus' reaction to it all. This is one I "sit in." Not trying to sound dramatic, but I allow this one make it's way into my heart. It's one that needs to be felt, because I get the sense that Jesus felt this one.

Uncomplicated Faith:

I love this passage because it reminds us of what Jesus is looking for in the big picture. Do you want to get Jesus' attention? Be like this woman. Don't worry about what others think of you. Don't worry if others see you or not. Don't worry if you're good enough for others. Are you pleasing to Jesus?

I've mentioned before that Jesus didn't typically compliment people. He usually had to correct and counsel. However, he'll stop and take note of someone now and then. When Jesus does so, it's typically "big picture" examples. They have to do with thankful and faithful attitudes. They have to do with sacrifice and humility. Too often, things that aren't worth our attention are all we think about.

Is there still a place in our hearts that seek to be like this purely because it is the right thing to do and pleases God? Concerning the latter aspect - do you believe that you can please God? Do you think He "stops" to look anymore? Do you think that because He knows you, He isn't pleased when you do the right thing? I've often wondered if angels rejoice, not only when others repent, but when they see humankind acting in faith. I wonder if it's discussed in heaven. Making our parents proud is a very natural thing to do . . . even when you get older. Do we still desire to please God because it's the right thing to do and is, simply put, good to do?

I thank you for your attention, but more than anything, my prayer is that your attention is on God, and His is on you. There's nothing more to say about this. Like it reads in Mark and Luke. Jesus pointed it out, and then He moved on to another topic. But He didn't forget this woman. It may feel like it, but He didn't. Do you know how I know that? Because we're still reading about her.