

THE RELIGIOUS WOLVES AND THE RIGHTEOUS WIDOW (Mk. 12:38-44)

Mk. 12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine [*διδάχῃ, teaching*], Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, ³⁹ And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: ⁴⁰ Which devour [*like vultures*] widows' houses [*... there's the link with the widows' mite ...*], and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation. ⁴¹ And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. ⁴² And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. ⁴³ And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: ⁴⁴ For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This is identical to Luke 20:45–21:4 where Jesus warns the people about their religious guardians, dressed in their finery, - their robes and regalia, - and present themselves as better than everyone else. They make sure to 'book' all the best seats at all the top tables to display their elevation. ... They wouldn't bother with the likes of you and me for they are far too sophisticated with their inflated egos, under the guise of religion. They are not there to represent God, but they are there to *extol* themselves. ... And anything religious they 'come out with', you can be sure they are using religion, - even if it be about God, - ... they are using it to prop up their own egos and selfish agenda. ... God is used, - rather, - abused, - in their line of religious apostasy.

That's who was in charge of religion in the times of Jesus ... and their legacy continues to this day! They are in it for their own gain, and God is a stranger to them. ... We are to beware of them (v.38), - stay away and have nothing to do with them. They are a plague on true religion! ... Enough about them!

After Jesus finished talking about them to the large crowd listening to Him in the temple, He went over and sat down ... just Him and His disciples. He simply *watched*. He saw the type of temple-goer these religious leaders were producing ... He watched the rich men making sure everyone saw how much they were putting into the offering boxes. ... But, in another part of the temple, there was a certain poor widow who simply and very privately dropped into the offering two coins ... hardly worth counting. Yet, Jesus remarked to His disciples, **Mk. 12:43** Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: ⁴⁴ For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

He was showing them how **her offering displayed her poverty**, **Mk. 12:43** *this poor widow* ... On her way into the temple this woman would have would have passed through the eastern gate, and into the Court of the Gentiles which was a large area paved with stones of various colours. It was open to everyone including the cattle-dealers and the money-changers, - it would have been a noisy, busy place. This court was also called the Outer Court, and the Lower Court. ... Now, all around the Temple proper was a nine-foot high terrace with stairs which was higher up than the Court of the Gentiles. It was surrounded by a five-foot high

wall to keep out the Gentiles, with pillars on the wall inscribed in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin warning Gentiles to come no further, under penalty of death.

Going beyond the Court of the Gentiles and at the top of the terrace there was a platform for about fifteen feet and then there was another wall. On the eastern side of *that* wall stood the magnificent sixty-foot wide "Gate Beautiful" (cf. Acts 3:2,10). ... Entering through this gate you would come to *The Court of the Women* ... This was as far as the women were allowed. It contained columns, and in front of these columns were eleven-twelve-thirteen treasure chests of the Temple for the voluntary offerings of money. ... From here, the temple officers 'kept an eye' on what was being deposited. ... It was all very intimidating, especially for a poor widow who had nothing.

These collecting boxes were known as the 'trumpet [*shofar*] boxes', and the more money was dropped in, the larger the sound, and the happier the temple officers. The contents of some of the 'trumpet boxes' purchased wood they used to burn in the sacrifices, the contents of another 'trumpet box' contributed to the upkeep of the golden vessels, and another 'trumpet box' would have been for the priests, and so on. ... It was near these collection boxes Jesus was sitting and watching.

Then, when He looked, He saw the rich men casting their gifts in ... and what a 'clatter' they made, - rightfully so for God had been good to them ... However, along came a poor widow, - you could tell what she was by how she was dressed, and her contribution made two little 'clinks', - you would hardly have heard them. All she had in the world was those two small brass coins ('lepta' means 'small', the smallest denomination, 1/100th of the currency) ... To her it was it was all she had, but to you and me and most of the people in the temple, it was nothing, - we would have been embarrassed to drop it on the plate. Yet, it was everything she had. She really was so poor! ... **Her offering displayed her poverty.** ... Yet, at the same time ... **Her offering displayed her sincerity,** as Jesus said, ⁴³ [this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.](#)

Two things determine the value of any gift. Firstly, the spirit in which it is given. If a gift is given unwillingly or grudgingly, you might as well keep it! If it is only given half-heartedly, it's no good. Or, if it is given so others can see how much you're handing over, it defeats the whole purpose of giving to the Lord. ... The real gift is the gift given because the giver *wants* to give it.

The second thing which determines the value of any gift is the sacrifice it involves. Obviously, if the rich men had dropped two mites into the offering it would have been shameful. ... What would have been mere 'change' to the wealthy men would have been a fortune to this widow. I'm sure, - when the rich men were counting out their money, - they would have calculated how much it

was comfortable for them to give, whereas, - in her calculations, - she gave everything she had. ... When she came into the temple, she came in with all she had ... and she left with nothing.

... And something else this woman's offering displayed was **her quality**, ⁴⁴ [For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had](#) ... This woman was going to do without because her heart led her to give to the Lord. I would reckon this woman had never shaken hands with Jesus, or had a conversation with Him ... or probably never even met Him ... and I reckon too she wouldn't have known Jesus was watching her, - ... how surprised she would be if she knew the Holy Spirit had included her in the Scriptures! Yet what she did was so beautiful and so meaningful the Lord has included her as an example to us today. She is unnamed, but she didn't go unnoticed. She has become one of the best-known characters in the New Testament ... and even secular people know about 'the widow's mites'. She has made an impression for the Saviour.

She speaks to us of the person who loves the Lord Jesus unselfishly, not for fame or to be noticed. We cannot build a doctrine upon her, nor we wouldn't build a church in her honour but she is the type of person God blesses any fellowship with. What a contrast to the priests and scribes, and all those rich folk! ... They were in their robes, and she was in her rags. They were looking for the praise, and she was simply looking for privacy to render the little she had unto God.

Probably few people ever spoke to her. When they came to the temple, they wouldn't have noticed her. And in her local synagogue, she would have sat quietly at the back ... No, she wouldn't have been noticed!

And something else that was very practical ... one of the purposes for having the offerings was to meet the needs of the widows and the orphans. The point is ... this widow was contributing towards others in similar circumstances to her own. She knew what it was like, and this was true service in the Lord's house!

And it is no wonder the Lord drew the attention of His disciples to her. To that widow, her two mites were as precious as two diamonds. You see, Jesus could see beyond what she had in her hand, for He was looking into her heart.

I trust you don't think I'm making an appeal for money to be given into the church, - that is not the purpose we are studying these verses, for if you genuinely have little of monetary value, please don't think your offering isn't important ... although you notice here, giving *nothing* is not an option. ... If it is given as the Lord lays it upon your heart ... that is between you and Him. He can do far more with the 'mites' than the 'millions' for 'little is much when God is in it'!

And it is also worth mentioning that when she gave her two mites, she hadn't enough left to buy a loaf of bread. Now, how could she give like that? There is only one explanation, - she was giving because she was depending upon God to provide ... She was trusting in the promise of His Word, for she knew the Law of Moses reached into her circumstances, **Dt. 14:29** *the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied.*

It is none of anyone else's business what you give ... and it doesn't matter whether it might gain the applause of others, but like Jesus watching this woman in the temple, our Heavenly Father knows exactly what we give and what we keep ... Take this further though ... Consider how the Lord Jesus began when He gave to us ... when He *thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation (Phil. 2:6,7)*. Jesus humbled Himself to become our salvation so that He would give us the riches of glory ... This widow woman simply delighted to have some small part to play in the ministry of her Jewish faith in the temple's supply to the needs of others, and she was giving sacrificially ... **44** *For ... she of her want did cast in all that she had ...* Jesus gave everything when He entered this world. He took nothing of Heaven's riches with Him, **Lk. 9:58** *Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

She's quite an example, isn't she?! Jesus thought so too! ... Yes, God is good, and above and beyond all else He offered His Son as our Sacrifice on the cross of Calvary so you and I would be privileged with the *riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19)*. Nothing, then, I can ever give compares with what He has already granted me ... and it simply comes to this ...

Saviour, Thy dying love Thou gavest me.
Nor should I aught withhold, dear Lord, from Thee.