

THE WIDOW'S MITES (Lk. 21:1-4)

The Lord Jesus was in the temple where, as He was teaching the people and preaching the Gospel, Lk. 20:1 the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders. As was their habit, they encircled Him with their usual barrage of insidious questions but He set them back, and put them in their place! He concluded with a private statement to His disciples, Lk. 20:46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; 47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

At that, He looked again and 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, Lk. 21:3 Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor [*πτωχός*, reduced to being a beggar ... cf. Lk. 16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate] widow hath cast in more than they all: 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury [*poverty*] hath cast in all the living that she had.

As we prepare to come to the Lord's Table, what is this passage showing us? ... The most basic observation shows how **HER OFFERING DISPLAYED HER POVERTY**, 2 And he saw also a certain *poor* widow casting in thither two mites.

On her way into the temple this woman would have passed through the eastern gate. Then she would have come to 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. 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 than the Court of the Gentiles. It was surrounded by a five-foot high wall designed to keep out the Gentiles, with pillars on the wall inscribed in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin warning all 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 east 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 the eleven to 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.

These collecting boxes were known as the 'trumpet boxes', and the more money was dropped in, the louder the sound, and the happier the temple officers. The contents of some of these 'trumpet boxes' went to purchase the wood on which they used to burn 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 trumpet-shaped collection boxes Jesus was sitting.

Then, when he looked, He saw the rich men casting their gifts in ... and what a 'clatter' they were making. ... However, along came a poor widow woman, - you could tell what she was by how she was dressed, and her contribution made two little 'clinks', - you could hardly have heard them. All she had in the world were those two small brass coins ('lepta' means 'small', the smallest denomination, 1/100th of the currency) ... To her it was a fortune, but to you and me and to the most of the people in the temple, it was nothing. Yet, it was everything she had. She really was so poor! ... **Her offering displayed her poverty.** ... At the same time ... **Her offering displayed her sincerity**, as Jesus said, ³ *Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.*

Two things determine the value of any gift. Firstly, the spirit in which it is given. If a gift is given unwillingly or begrudgingly, you might as well keep it! If it is 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, no matter how little he or she has.

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 for what would have been mere 'change' to them 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 she gave everything. ... When she came into the temple, she came in with her life's savings ... and she left with nothing.

Jesus noticed this for in his account, Mark records, **Mk. 12:41** *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 ... and it was only right they were giving much, because they had much to give ... and they had it because, despite the kind of*

people they were, God had given it to them, - He had *well*-prospered them ... more than they deserved! ... But that is how *we* also should give, - we should give as God prospers us. The more we have received from Him, the more we should return to Him ... and there is another important principle to remember here, and it is this ... I should be faithful in *all* my giving to Him, - not just my money, - because He is the Source of *all* I am and *all* I have. I have my home because of Him ... I have my family and my loved ones and my friends because of Him ..., and my car, and my holidays, and so many other things I enjoy ... for He has blessed me ... All I have is what He has given me, so, He has the right to it all and I'm only the servant who is taking care of it for I'll be called to give an account of how I used it.

... And something else this woman's offering displayed was **her quality**, ⁴ *she of her penury [poverty] hath cast in all the living 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, nor 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 type of 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 offer the little she had to 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 more 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 to give, please don't think your offering isn't important. ... If it is given as the Lord lays it upon your heart for you to give ... that is between you and Him. He does 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 didn't even have 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 simply 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 just like Jesus watching this woman in the temple, our Heavenly Father knows exactly what we give and what we keep ... Take this a step further though, as we prepare for the Lord's Table ... Consider how He 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). As far as the world was concerned, this widow woman was of no reputation ... she simply delighted to have some small part to play in the ministry of her Jewish faith in the temple's supply of the needs of others, and she was giving sacrificially ... *she of her penury [poverty, extreme insufficiency] hath cast in all the living that she had.* ... Jesus gave everything when He entered this world. He took nothing of Heaven's glory 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 everything else He sacrificed His Son so that I am privileged to those *riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Phil. 4:19). He is our Sacrifice, freely offered on Calvary, and nothing I can ever give compares what He has already given to me ... And it comes down to this ...

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