



## **Mark 12:41–44**

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few pence. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury

than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.’

## **Reflection**

The Bible teaches us a lot about God’s special care for widows, orphans, the poor, sick and elderly. The Old Testament law as recorded in the first five books of the Bible makes regular provision for the most vulnerable in society. One of the greatest charges the prophets levelled against Israel and Judah before their banishment by God into exile was their abuse of the weakest members of society that God had charged them to protect. Listen to Isaiah,

Woe to those who make unjust laws,  
to those who issue oppressive  
decrees,  
2 to deprive the poor of their rights  
and withhold justice from the op-  
pressed of my people,  
making widows their prey  
and robbing the fatherless. Isa  
10:1

Or the prophet Amos,

6 This is what the Lord says:

‘For three sins of Israel,  
even for four, I will not relent.  
They sell the innocent for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of san-  
dals.

7 They trample on the heads of the

poor

as on the dust of the ground  
and deny justice to the oppressed.

Amos 2:6–7

And so it is no wonder that our God, whom Psalm 68:5 describes as ‘father to the fatherless, a defender of widows’ should send his Son to earth to spend the greater part of his ministry bringing relief, friendship and salvation to the most vulnerable in society. Jesus spent countless hours with the marginalised, healing their diseases, casting out their demons, eating with tax collectors and sinners, becoming friends with hurting people whom society had disregarded in order that he might share life and share the gospel of eternal life with them. And in his ethical teaching, Jesus commands his followers to do the

same.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus announces his ministry by reading the words of Isaiah in his home synagogue in Nazareth. Here are his words from Luke 4,

18 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim free-  
dom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
19 to proclaim the year of the  
Lord's favour.'

Jesus, like his Father, cares for, especially, the most vulnerable in our midst. Which explains some of the heat in Friday's pas-

sage that Jesus directed at the teachers of the law in Jerusalem, to so-called experts in the law and leaders of God's people who, to quote Jesus from last week,

like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."

In today's passage, right after these comments, Jesus further shames the greed of the teachers of the law, these 'devourers of widows houses' contrasting their greed with the faith of one of their potential victims. Here's what happens next, Mark

12:41–44,

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Jesus is teaching and preaching in the great Court of the Gentiles that surrounds

and engulfs the temple in Jerusalem. Inside it, in progressively smaller rings, are three further, much smaller courts: the Court of Women in which Jewish women and children were allowed to worship; the Court of Israel accessible only by Jewish males and the Court of Priests, at the centre of which stood the temple building. In today's passage the scene shifts to the temple treasury which was located in the Court of Women.

Jesus points out a poor widow making her offering of two very small copper coins in one of thirteen dedicated chests for special offerings, each going to a different purpose. ]In purely financial terms the widow's gift was negligible, but in the divine scale of value, her gift is inestimable. Listen to Jesus, comparing her to the rich



putting in their gifts,

44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

God has no need of our money. The one who created the heavens and earth and everything in them, doesn't need us to fund his next venture. His interest isn't in our money, it's in the state of our hearts. And so for Jesus, the value of a gift is not the amount given, but the cost to the giver; not how much is given, but how much is retained for self. Others gave what they could spare; the widow spares nothing. Others gave from their surplus; the widow gives from her need 'all she had to live on.'

## Think & Pray

One of the creeds of our culture is ‘money speaks’. Jesus would agree. Consider this morning what this poor widow’s money says of her devotion to and trust in God. What is your money saying about you? From the Greek we learn that each of the two coins the woman gave was worth an eighth of a cent – nothing in worldly terms; but for her all she had in the world. She gave two eighths of a cent, one of which she might have retained. But she didn’t, she gave it all to our Lord demonstrating her devotion to him and her trust that he would provide. And has there ever been a more substantial financial donation to the kingdom of God? Can you imagine how the faith of this poor widow has encouraged believers down throughout two mil-

lennia to be generous with their money? This poor widow's faith and her two eighths of a cent have had a profound effect on the kingdom of God, just as your faith as demonstrated through your financial generosity no doubt will be used by God for far greater ends than you can imagine.

Pray to Jesus this morning that through the work of his Spirit you and I both might have our hearts transformed and filled with the kind of faith that this widow exemplifies. Pray that we would share in God's special regard for widows, orphans, the poor, sick and elderly and that we would give generously and sacrificially to the work of the gospel and the care of the most vulnerable in our community and in the wider world.