

Jesus and the Widow's Mite
Mark 12:41-44, Trinity Sunday XI
August 11, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....Generally speaking, once a year one way or another in our sermon texts the subject of giving to church comes up. Upon learning that this Sunday's text was on the Widow's Mite, the thought occurred to me it has been quite a while since we have had the subject. There was none last year or the year before if memory serves correct. This must then be the Lord's timing, and thus a good time for us to be edified as to the purpose or reason why we contribute our earthly dollars to the collection plate.

The reason of course should not be hard to understand, for every Sunday it is the practice of this congregation to pray after the collection has been taken, "We give Thee but Thine own, what'ere the gift may be, all that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from thee. May we Thy bounties thus, As stewards true receive, And gladly as Thou blessest us, To Thee our firstfruits give." Yet even these words though dear, fall a bit short. Though Christ is mentioned in Hymn #441 overall His work of salvation does not rise to the top. Today then let us consider a new verse to compliment the others as to the reason "We give Thee but Thine own". Another verse could be this: *Thou hast for our sake Lord, Thy body dearly given, Thy blood O Christ does justify, all sins are now forgiven.* Our returning gifts to the Lord then are nothing more than the fruit of all He first gave us, namely forgiveness, salvation, the Holy Spirit, faith to believe, even everlasting life. When we give to church, we are doing nothing more than saying "Thank You" to God for all He has done. We also give to support the public preaching and teaching of the Gospel for by our contributions the Gospel ministry is supported, the laborer being worthy of his reward. When you give therefore dear Christian, give your firstfruits to Him who loved you first, for "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

I. Those who gave much without faith. In today's lesson, Jesus was seated in what is called the Women's Court, a lesser court within the Court of the Gentiles, near the Temple. It was here that thirteen chests or boxes were placed to receive the offerings of the people. The shape of this chest was like a trumpet, namely narrow on top where they money is inserted, and wide on the bottom where such is collected. As Jesus sat within viewing distance, it was natural to notice all the people stopping there to give their offering. "Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much." While this was undoubtedly a common everyday occurrence, Jesus knew the hearts of the people. They gave from their abundance and not from their want. Jesus was not their first love. They were not cheerful givers giving in faith, but habitual givers whose gifts did not

proceed from faith. That is often how we give to church also, and it really touches upon much of the good we do in life. Most of the good we do doesn't proceed from faith but mere habit. For example, we might say "God bless you" when someone sneezes, but without thinking we are taking the name of God in vain. Also we might practice good manners out of habit, yet these words or deeds are not done in godly love for neighbor, or respect, it's just our habit. We also give to church out of habit. How many times do you suppose we have put money in the collection plate, yet we didn't happily give by faith and love of heart out of all God has done for us. Don't we so often think, "I could really use this money right now, and I hate to part with it." Yet when we spend our money on entertainment, or some special gift for ourselves, it's not such a struggle is it? And don't we find happiness in finally getting what we want? Do we find the same happiness when we give to the Lord in church?

Speaking of church, quite often we also come to church out of habit even though in our heart we find little need to come. Inwardly we have little remorse over our sin, or we think we haven't done anything really bad this week. What Jesus did for us on the cross doesn't seem that great to us. Yet still we come to church out of habit, we confess our sins mechanically without thinking, yet through it all our heart is far from the Lord. In Matthew 15 Jesus speaks of this great evil saying, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me." Likewise, how many times do you suppose we have sung the Page 5 liturgy, or prayed the Lord's Prayer mechanically without thinking about what we're saying or singing? Again Jesus said in Matthew six, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Consider also our confession of sin before Holy Communion on Page 16. Here is where we say of our sins, "But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them", but truly how often are we HEARTILY SORRY.....SINCERELY REPENTING of our sins?

And so when we see the common people casting their money into the treasury mechanically without thought or faith, let us see ourselves doing the same. More often than not we do so without faith and love for Christ in our heart at that particular moment or time. These outwardly good works then are not by any means good in the sight of God, but evil, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" and as Jesus said, "without Me ye can do nothing." "For *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." As Christians then let us simply understand we do many outwardly good works in our own sight, but because it does not proceed from faith and love toward God, it is yet a dead work in God's sight and the blood of Jesus Christ alone can cleanse us from this sin.

II. The faith of the poor widow who gave all. Let us move on now to the poor widow woman who didn't give much in the sight of men, but in the sight of God she truly did a good and wonderful work. Note how after all the other people

gave to the treasury, when no one else was around, a single poor widow appeared and she quietly approached and put two mites into the treasury. This is the proper spirit or way to give to the Lord, namely in secret without a show of what we are doing. In Matthew six Jesus said, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets.... But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." When we give to the Lord in faith and love for all He's done for us, we are not doing such so other people see our deed. When we give to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, it is as if there is no other person in the world. This is a gift to the lover of my soul, my Lord, my Savior, my Jesus who died for me.

Such a gift given, is a gift only faith can give. Note well how Jesus wanted to impress upon the disciples the great difference in the widows contribution, for "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: 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." A mite at that time was worth about one seventh of a cent. This was literally all the money she possessed. It is also significant she cast in two mites and not one. She didn't hold back even one mite for her own supper, but she gave all that she had though she was a poor widow. In the eyes of men this was a pathetic offering. In the sight of God she was the apple of His eye.

Some people wrongly conclude from this that we must give all our paycheck to the Lord. Others wrongly use this lesson in order to justify the very little they give to church, when they are quite capable of giving more, yet greedily they hoard their money like misers without faith. But the beauty of this woman's gift was simply that it proceeded from her faith and love for God, and faith gives without expecting anything in return. Do you think God really needs our two mites, or our tithes, or our green dollars? Isn't the Maker of heaven and earth also the Possessor of heaven and earth? But why then should we give to God if He doesn't need anything? But every Christian knows the answer. "We love Him because He first loved us."

FIRST and foremost this poor widow was able to give all to the Lord because she was thankful to God for her salvation. Like all Christians, she knew her own hypocrisy. She knew that she was a sinful and selfish creature by nature, filled with coveteousness, lack of contentment, a complaining spirit, and many other sins. She also knew well the sting of death, for she had seen her husband die. Her love for the world had likewise died and she felt the curse and condemnation of God's law, yet she was not without hope. God had preached unto her the Gospel. She had heard the promise of a Savior for her sins and she believed. In her heart even now as she gave, a true love for Christ lived within. Even now she was eager to be with

Jesus, yet she didn't even realize Jesus was watching her now. So it is for us who live every sad and painful day in this world. We forget Jesus is watching over us with a tender love from above. We forget "The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy....Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him."

A SECOND reason this widow was able to give all, is because she believed all the promises of God which never fail. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." This was God's promise to her. God was now her husband. God would still provide. He would give her each day her daily bread as He had done always in the past, and even if she had nothing, God would give her manna from heaven. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceedeth from the mouth of God." Jesus was her Bread of Life, even before Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Though giving all to the Lord that day so she had no money to buy bread, how hungry could she really be? Jesus had given her the words of everlasting life. The Bread of Life had satisfied her hunger for forgiveness.

FINALLY the THIRD reason she was able to give all, was because she trusted in God above all things. Her Father in heaven had promised her His Son, surely His Spirit would give her all those things she truly needed, and she did not truly need those two mites. God would replace. God would give more, and even if He didn't give, He would give "grace to help in time of need" for "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Beloved of the Lord, it is no doubt a great hardship for a woman to be a widow, or a man to be a widower, yet God still provides, God still loves, God still uplifts, God still strengthens the hidden life, and God still forgives. Therefore "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not on thine own understanding." "As *for* God, his way *is* perfect; the word of the LORD *is* tried: he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him. For who *is* God, save the LORD? and who *is* a rock, save our God? God *is* my strength *and* power: and he maketh my way perfect." 2 Sam. 22. Amen.

...and now may the PEACE of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.