

## THE WIDOW'S OFFERING

Mark 12:41-44

### Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- Have you ever gone through the motions when doing a task or participating in an event even though your heart wasn't in it? What was the effect on the final outcome?
- Which do you find easier to do: give something to God (i.e. money, time, worship) or offer someone else mercy? Why?

As Jesus teaches the crowds in the Temple courts, he warns them against the false holiness and hypocrisy of the religious authorities. Immediately after, he turns his disciples' attention to a seemingly innocuous event: a widow who places her meager offering in the Temple collection box. Jesus' observation offers us an invaluable lesson about the heart of generosity, sacrifice, and giving. But there is more to his teaching. Study the story of the Widow's Offering in the context of the full passage, and discover the connection between Holy Week and God's call for us to be people that share his heart for justice and mercy.

**Listen:** [The Widow's Offering](#)

### Reflection

After listening, consider:

- Both the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:28-34) and the Widow's Offering Mark 12: 41-44) describe what God desires from us: a loving heart filled with justice and mercy. Without these our other gifts and sacrifices to God are empty actions. Why do you think it can be more difficult for us to live into the kingdom values that lead us to love and look out for others than those that call us to follow rules about worship, giving, and sacrifices?
- Read Mark 12:38-40. Towards the end of the passage Jesus accuses the religious leaders of false holiness. Similarly, at the end of segment 2, host Scott Hoezee observes, "*There is something wrong with the Temple here. You are using it as a cover for your sinfulness instead of the place to get yourself right with God.*" What practices or actions today might we falsely believe indicate someone's holiness? What religious practices or symbols today might take the place of the temple, but serve the same purpose for us today?
- How does Jesus' teaching on giving, which highlights generosity and focuses on motivation, help you assess your current giving practices? Evaluate your giving of money (tithing), talents, and time.
- Arthur A. Just Jr., in his commentary on Luke from the Concordia Commentary series, writes this about Luke's version of the Widow's Offering (Luke 18:9-14) : "Perhaps Jesus is both lamenting the greedy coercion of the scribes, *while at the same time* commending the widow's unselfish devotion to the work that goes on in God's holy temple. She is exactly what Jesus called his disciples to be: completely devoted to the work of the Lord, even if the unscrupulous scribes demand excessive sacrifice. Jesus' call to discipleship has never been "practical" (see, e.g., 18:22). In fact, "in its 'impracticality' regarding the woman's ongoing life, it has the mark of Jesus and his radical teaching about it" (p. 781). Do you agree

with his observation about Jesus' call to discipleship? What other examples from scripture support this understanding of the story in the context of discipleship?

## Related Passages

- **Mark 12:28-40**
- **Luke 21:1-4**
- **Isaiah 1:11-17**
- **Amos 5:21-24**
- **Luke 18:9-14**
- **1 Samuel 16:7**

## Conclusion

Think about the ways you and/or your church community prioritize caring for those God cares about. Describe your attitude and motivation for participation. In what ways does the following prayer from *Canyon Road: A Book of Prayers* by Kari Kristina Reeves incorporate or reflect the lessons you learned from the story of the Widow's Offering?

Give me the kind of love you possess. I do not have it within myself. I need you to give it to me, God. I know this is a prayer that will please you. Answer me in your love.

I want to give love freely, without counting the cost, but this is not natural. I do not have it within myself. I need you to give it to me, God. I know this is a prayer that will please you. Answer me in your love.

I want to bless, with joy, and self-sacrifice, not considering my own wants, but I do not have it within myself. I need you to give it to me, Lord. I know this is a prayer that will please you. Answer me in your love.

Give me this love in abundance. Please, God, grant my request, and make me a shining beacon, radiant with the generosity of Jesus (p.66).

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