

Pastor writes

Our theme for this morning's meditation is 'A Generous Spirit'. Jesus talks about the teachers of the law and their behavior and then about a poor widow who gave generously of the little that she had. Jesus continues his teaching in the Temple courts in Jerusalem. Jesus warns the people about the teachers of the Law, saying that they like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the market places have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. The teachers of the law wore long robes that were fringed and almost reached to the ground. The point is that these robes helped the people to identify them as the Teachers of the Law and therefore were greeted in the market place. The problem is about the intention of the heart rather than anything else. They were concerned about their status and reputation.

Jesus then sits down opposite the place where the offerings were put in the temple treasury. This temple treasury was located in the court of the women which was the first space in the temple and beyond this the women could not go. It contained 13 trumpet shaped receptacles for contributions brought by worshippers. There were six chests that were marked for freewill offerings, two for the temple tax, one for each of the following: bird offerings, young bird for whole offerings, wood, incense and Gold for the sacred vessels. These were all given for the work of the temple and charitable donations for the poor were made separately. Mark records for us that many rich people threw in large amounts. These could have been silver or gold coins. The copper coin that she gave was the smallest denomination of currency that was used known as the *lepton* in Greek. The poor widow came in and put these two copper coins. A *lepton* was probably equivalent to about 6 minutes of wages of a daily labourer. It was almost next to nothing. It may be like putting two one rupee coins in today's world.

Jesus had observed all those who were giving out of their bounteous riches and feeling proud about it and saw this poor widow who came in and put in two very small copper coins. He then calls his disciples to him and said, *"Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on."* Jesus knew that the woman had given everything she had. It was total commitment. She out of her poverty put everything that she had to live on. There was no holding back in the manner in which she gave. She gave with a generous spirit all that she had to live on, because in her heart she believed that she was giving it to the Lord.

Jesus therefore uses this poor widow to teach us to give off ourselves completely to the Lord's service. Whether it is our money or our time or talent, we are called to give them all to God. The OT reminds us to give a tithe to the Lord. A tithe is a 10 percent of our income. We are called to give that as an indication that everything that we have is from God. Most of us do not even a give one percent of our income as tithes. In the book of the prophet Malachi the Lord confronts the people of Judah and tells them that they had not kept the Lord's decrees and robbed God because they had not paid their tithes. The Lord says *'bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be enough room to store it.'* But we do not bring in the whole tithe.

We think of the Church as an institution to which we reluctantly give. But our attitude must be that we give to God as an act of gratitude for all the blessings that he has blessed us with including our jobs and our salaries. Paul writing to the Corinthian Church cites the example of the Macedonians who gave liberally saying, *'For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,'* (2 Co 8:3 NIV).

How do we give? Do we give generously? I would encourage every earning member to begin with setting aside ten percent of your income and give it God. Test God in this for a year and see that you will never run short of your basic needs. What is the measure that we use to give to God? Do we give a measure that is well shaken and pressed? Or are we miserly in our giving to God? Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38 NIV).

Shalom

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