

In 1987 I was part of a small group of WA Baptist Pastors who traveled to the Philippines and there joined up with a large group of American Southern Baptists Pastors. They had been in Manila for a day or two already when we arrived and I first saw a group of them coming out of the hotel, all dressed in their three piece suits and all smoking the cheap cigars that they had evidently just purchased. From a Baptist culture that is mainly a non-smoking one this was quite a culture shock, and I couldn't but help make a contrast between them and us. Soon after that I arrived at the small rural village where I would spend the next two weeks preaching. There I met people who so loved the Lord but had very little as far as the material things I am so used to. The Pastor was paid in rice, and the amount he received depended upon the harvest. Suddenly I was hit by yet another contrast. But this time it was between me and those servants of the Lord who had so little, yet so much joy in service.

The reason I mention.....is because Jesus also highlights a contrast in Mark 12:38-44 But the contrast then was not simply a cultural one

Neither was it having possessions.....compared to having very little

The contrast Jesus pointed to....related...state of a person's heart in sight of God
The heart of a poor widow.....and the heart of the teachers of the law

When we look at the context of this passage see that earlier...(28-34)

Jesus had dealt with a questionabout the greatest commandment

- **Asked by one of these Teachers**.....The answer Jesus gave was to love...

And when the Teacher said....You are so right.....Jesus commended him

"When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'" (v34)

- **This Scribe understood that it wasn't impressing others**.....

But pleasing God

- **Neither was it storing up** importance....prestige...goods for oneself

But treating one's neighbour.....whatever their status.....

.as you yourself would wish to be treated

I sense that Jesus emphasized YOU when He talked to this man

Because from what Jesus then went on to say about the Teachers

This man was very different from his peers Look at v38-40

"As He taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widow's houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

These teachers were men who were looked up to in that Society.

The feeling was that they knew so much, spent so much time in the Temple, prayed so often that they must be good.....**Really close to God**

- **To hear Jesus say that such men will be punished most severely**

Was to hear something so shocking....So unexpected.....That it was hard to believe.

What Jesus said was completely opposite to the general feeling of the majority
And the Scribes knew that

- In fact the Scribes took advantage of the adulation they received
- They got used to being noticed
- They wore their long pure white cloaks with the tassels on everywhere and not just in the Temple
- They created bottle necks on street corners by obviously reciting their prayers
- They were used to being honoured
- Claiming the best seats in the synagogues
- The best places at the feasts
- The best greetings in the market places

Another important thing to realize about these Teachers was that it was recognized that the great knowledge they had, and the skill with which they taught, were gifts from God.

- **Consequently** they were not allowed to charge for their services, only to receive gifts from God's people.

In practice this meant that the people, and especially the rich, were so in awe of the Teachers, that they gave them in abundance.

The Scribes often became quite rich men

- **Along with that....these Teachers** were able to use their skills to administer trust funds and estates

Especially funds left by the deceased husband for his widow

And for such duties they demanded some gratuities and also they would skim...

But such widows were weak: So what if the Scribes defrauded ?? No big deal!!

So everything Jesus said about them was true....Yet before men they got away with **Indeed their behaviour** heightened the regard in which they were held !!

So Jesus.....In order to make His point even clearer

Sits down in the women's court of the Temple.....

right near to the wall where **13 trumpet shaped bronze** containers stood.

These were where the people placed their free-will offerings for the Lord's work

- All could hear the sound of money being thrown into.....
- The rich threw their silver coins.....gold coins.....with a flourish
- At times an official stood there and called out the amount that was given

Jesus waited till a poor widow came along...with two of the smallest coins poss

- After having talked about the ScribesShowing how God saw them
- He now talks about the poor widow.

12:43-44

"Calling His disciples to Him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Now of course Jesus is making the obvious contrast between the rich and the widow
He says so

**God is more interested in what we have left after giving.....
than the amount we give**

We tend to appreciate the amount of a gift

Rather than the sacrifice that went into the giving.....(And sometimes God gives us a lesson on that very thing.....Philippines experience)

**Sometimes a minimal gift(as in this case)
takes a maximum sacrifice.**

While for others a minimum gift might not really be much of a gift at all.

But as well as this obvious contrast

Consider the contrast between the Teachers and this poor widow

- The Teachers were looked up to and highly valued
- The widows were seen as a drain on Society.....A burden to be despised
- The Teachers were praised and fawned over
- The widows were neglected and forgottenTheir worth to Society too small

Yet Jesus saw the self seeking of the Teachers of the Law

Their hypocrisy and their pride.....

Like the rich they thought they gave so much to God

But by their showiness they revealed a gift given more for themselves than for God

And God the Son who looks on the heart.....condemned them

- **But of the poor widow He has but praise.....**

For her gift reveals how her heart stands in the sight of God

First: It was a gift that showed a genuine response to God

We know that it was a gift of two tiny coins.....

and Jesus tells us that it was all she had to live on

But something led her to give both coins to God.....A freewill offering

- Was it in thanksgiving for some mercy?
- Was it a promise she had made that she kept despite her poverty?
- Was it an inner compulsion from God's Spirit? We don't know

**But because of it's nature we can sense that
it was a real response to her God**

- **Just think how valuable that is to God**

When the gift we give Him whether its money...time.....talents

Is a genuine response of love that refuses to count the cost (Mother Teresa)

Second: It was a gift that showed genuine Trust in God

Surely she gave all she had because she trusted God to supply all her needs

- Those two tiny coins being all she had
- Was much more than a gift in God's sight

By giving them as she did she was saying to God.....**I trust** You to look after me

***This morning we have prayed for Charmaine as she sets off tomorrow to
Cambodia She goes knowing that she has no visa to enter***

But she knows that God has called her to go.....So her going is an act of genuine trust

This last week some of you began the work of mentoring at the local school

I know that for all of you it was something you entered with little knowledge of what lay ahead, but still you offered, believing God would look after you. Would enable you

God delights to see in our giving---whatever we give....The presence of genuine trust

Third: It was a gift that was a genuine offering.

Back in 1 Chron 21 and verse 24 we read of the occasion when King David sets out to purchase the land for God's Temple. The owner offers to give it to him and this is how David responds :

"No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

The widow's gift cost her everything.....yet she willingly gave it

- **Surely we can imagine** God looking upon the hearts of the Teachers
And seeing selfishness.....seeing pride.....seeing complacency

Yet within the heart of the widow

He saw a real response to His goodness.....

A trust in His Grace.....a willingness to sacrifice.....

WHAT is it He sees in our hearts?

For surely we who love Christ have more reason to give than that widow ever had

For God the Son also gave His all for us

There on the cross He lay down before His Father

The supreme gift.....The ultimate Sacrifice

So that we might have life

Therefore ..as Paul says in Romans 12:1-

"I urge you on account of what Christ has done for you(in view of God's mercy), to offer your bodies(all you are), back to God as living sacrifices. Ones that are holy and pleasing to Him"