

The Poor Widow

AIM: to teach my pupils that everyone has an equal opportunity to be of much use to the Lord

POINT OF CONTACT: Ask the students what is the largest amount of money that they have ever seen. Then ask what is the smallest coin they have. A discussion of coins and monetary values is a natural point of contact for this lesson.

INTRODUCTION: Jesus has been speaking to the scribes and denouncing their greed. He is still in the temple. He sits down in the area where the people come to give their offerings for the upkeep of the temple. In this general place were either 11 or 13 funnel-shaped containers. These containers were each labeled for a particular need of the temple. Collectively, they were called "the treasury." The people came and cast money into these various containers, giving their offering for the needs of the temple. The wealthy people had been casting pieces of brass money; the poor widow lady came and cast the two smallest coins available into the treasury. There seems to have been a tradition that two mites was the smallest amount that it was possible for a person to give.

After she had given these two mites, which would be less than one cent in American money, the Lord called the disciples together and commended her action. By the way, the treasury is the "Corbanas." This is the repository of those things that are mentioned as being "Corban" in Mark 7:11. This story is more than just a narrative of how a lady gave but is also our example for doing any service for the Lord. Let us learn from the poor widow's example as told in Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4.

I. SHE CAME WHERE JESUS WAS.

This is an age when people can find so many places to go, so many things to do. This lady was a working widow. When she is spoken of as a "poor widow," it literally means, "a widow who worked for what she had." I am sure that Sunday was probably the only time she had to do the laundry, but she still came where Jesus was and gave in His presence. Stress a great deal coming to the places where the Lord says come. He tells us, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," and Christians assemble many places on Sunday; in fact, in many places where they should not be, they assemble. Percentage-wise, the greatest number of Christians on Sunday will be assembled in a church.

II. SHE FOLLOWED THE EXAMPLE OF THOSE ABOUT HER.

We learn a great deal by example. Matthew 23:3 even bids us to observe the things that the scribes and Pharisees do and to do those things which they do that are proper. New Christians learn in three ways when they come to church:

1. They learn from the pulpit.
2. They learn by following the right example of those that are about them.
3. They also learn by not doing some things that people about them may do that are being done improperly. (Stress strongly to your younger pupils the need for following the example of older, stronger Christians.)

III. SHE DID MORE THAN SHE HAD TO DO.

It is generally accepted that a widow was not obligated to give for the upkeep of the temple, for many Scriptures (Deuteronomy 14:29; I Timothy 5:3, 5 and 16) tell us that the godly people are responsible for the maintenance of the widows rather than the widows being responsible for the maintenance of

the other people. This lady was not obligated as were the heads of families, but she gave, even though it was not a legal obligation. (This is a good place to impress upon our students that we may do things for the Lord over and above what is expected just because we want to please Him.)

IV. SHE GAVE WHEN IT TOOK EFFORT TO DO SO.

Notice in Mark 12:41, "...the people cast money into the treasury...." In verse 42, the widow "threw in two mites." There is a slight difference in the connotation of the two words "cast" and "throw." "Cast" seems to denote a casual, flicking motion much as we use the word "casting" when we go fishing. "Throw" denotes something that has effort connected with it, as a pitcher winds up and with much deliberation throws the ball. The point seems to be that it was hard for her to do what she had to do. Put yourself in her position and imagine that you do not have enough food to last the day nor enough money to purchase food to last out the day. Imagine the effort that it would be to take all your remaining money and put it into the treasury. Yet, she did it! (This is a good place to dwell upon the fact that Christians do not always do what is easy to do or what they would personally want to do, but they do what the Lord says for them to do.)

V. SHE SET OUR EXAMPLE FOR GIVING.

The Lord does not condemn the rich who gave a great amount, for any gift that is given for the cause of the Lord is acceptable. Truthfully, the gift is acceptable no matter in what spirit it is given. It is more acceptable, of course, if it is given properly. This lady had little to give, but she gave all that she had, giving to us this fundamental precept in giving to the Lord: The Lord looks not on how much we give, but on how much is left over after we give. He looks not on how much we give, but on the sacrifice we make in giving it.

VI. SHE HAD A SWEET SPIRIT AMONG PEOPLE WHO HAD PROBABLY WRONGED HER.

Notice Mark 12:38-40 where the Lord is condemning the scribes for devouring the goods of the widows. Here was a widow who probably had some other goods stolen. Here was a lady who had no children with her, so this probably means that she lived alone. Here was a lady who rightfully should have been supported by these people, and yet she had to work to support herself. What a tremendous expression of sweet-spirited Christianity when a person who has been wronged, consciously or unconsciously, can be sweet, kind and courteous among the same people who have wronged him!

V. SHE WAS COMMENDED PUBLICLY FOR HER DEED BUT NOT PERSONALLY.

The language of the passage does not seem to be Jesus speaking directly to her, but it seems that He called the disciples together and used her as an example to them. Matthew 5:16 is being fulfilled here.

CONCLUSION: We as Christians are called the "Bride of Christ." Whether we be male or female, there are many things that we can learn and much that we can do by following the example of this widow.