

The Poor Widow's 'Mite'

'Sam Goldsmith went out with his wife during the [Great] Depression. They would often go window-shopping because they didn't have money to purchase anything. One night, looking in a fur store, the wife saw a beautiful jacket and exclaimed: "Sam, I really would like it. Don't you think you could purchase it for me?" Sam thought for a moment and replied, "Dearest, extenuating circumstances perforce me to preclude you from such a multiple extravagance". She replied, "I don't get it". To which Sam answered, "Exactly".'

Since this is a fictitious couple, we have the liberty of drawing some generalizations from them. We can see here taught the moral that human beings should not fixate themselves on the things of this world, like Mrs. Goldsmith presumably did when pleading with her husband to buy a fur for her. All while apparently fully knowing that they couldn't afford it anyway. But still she wanted it enough to ask. One could say that they should have been more than content that they had just enough money to cover their essential physical needs of enough food, clothing and shelter. But, as we all know, and as some of us have personal experience because we're guilty of it, people are rarely satisfied with what they have. They always want more. And what they always

want more of are the things of this world. And since just about everything this world offers can be bought for a price, the shortcut to getting everything we want is to have more money.

Someone last week won the biggest lottery prize in U.S. history. \$2.04 billion; the winning ticket sold in California. Assuming the lucky winner took the annuity of 29 annual payments equalling the full amount, and imagining they wouldn't have to pay any income tax on the amount, they'd still be "poor" compared to the world's richest man, Elon Musk, whose fortune totals over \$200 billion. For us "run-of-the-mill" people, "peasants", "unwashed, sweaty masses", "domestic terrorist deplorables", no matter how much "stuff" and wealth we accumulate, there's always someone with more. Which should beg the question, why we even bother to keep track? Didn't we read somewhere several weeks ago that someone literally said that all the money in the world is all "meaningless"? Seems like it was King Solomon, wasn't it?

If that's true, then it shouldn't come as any surprise what our Lord Jesus told the disciples when they happened to be watching the "worshippers" of God putting in their tithes and offerings into the collection box. They beheld the wealthy dropping their large offerings into the box, who often made sure others noticed their supposed great "generosity". And then they saw a poor widow in the line. Widows in those days were generally quite poor because with their husbands dead, if they had no son who could help support them, they had no regular income at all. This partic-

ular widow was obviously quite poor, a true “peon” if there ever was one, but she gave to the Lord in worship what she had, trifle as it may have been. She threw in two mites. The mite was the smallest of Jewish coinage. In today’s money, she dropped in about 2½ mills. You all do remember what a mill is, right? It’s 1/10th of a cent. So this poor widow dropped in the enormous amount of 25% of 1 cent! This was such a tiny amount that it would hardly even register for most merchants of the day.

So what did our Lord tell His disciples about this woman’s offering? He made the absolutely astounding statement that she had put more in the collection box than all the others had, combined! Because she had put in all she had. Now, another question that begs to be asked here is, if it had been you, and those were your last two pennies (albeit that would be a lot more money than she had, but it’s the least amount we can give in our money today), would you have given them? What is your attitude toward God? If that’s all she had, why did she give it all to God? Would you? Why or why not? Do you think she expected God to, all of a sudden, rescue her from poverty with someone giving her a winning lottery ticket? They actually had those back then! Or, in another frame of mind, do you think she threw in those two tiny coins in a fit of desperation, bemoaning her wretched estate, preparing to die from starvation not long afterwards? In other words, could this have been a form of a slow motion suicide?

Now, don’t get mad at me. I’m just asking questions. But

the answer to most all of them should be found wrapped up in our Lord's statement in Luke 21:3-4: "I tell you the truth", Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has". Without doubt, this poor widow did not blow any horns to announce she'd put in everything she had. Do you really think anybody really noticed her at all? Let alone what she put in? Do you think Lord Jesus was sitting right next to the box and looking intently at everyones' hands to see what each put in? If not, then how did He know what she put in? Oh, yes, it was His laser vision, His superman eyesight that allowed Him to zoom in on what was in her hand, and see it was two mites! Not! I tell you, He knew what was in her hand before she even dropped it in. Lord Jesus saw this woman before she even got to the Temple. He knew her difficult circumstances and He knew that God was with her and would be getting her through even when there seemed to be no way. He said, she "has given more than all the rest of them"! Did this minuscule amount matter to the upkeep of the Temple? It would hardly add the slightest amount to the Temple's operating budget, being not even enough to be a rounding error! And yet, our Lord declares she has given more than all the rest! So did what she put in really matter?

Oh, you bet it did! Here is an incident that would otherwise be so unimportant and mundane that no one would bother to record it. Yet here Luke records it, as does also Mark, in chapter

12. This widow is singled out by our Lord and given some of the highest praise He gave anyone while on earth. For her two “mites” were actually truly “mighty”. Her faith in God was mighty! Hers was no act of desperation, but one of faith, of throwing her lot completely in with the Lord, of believing His multitude of promises in His written word that He does care for the faithful. She may well have recalled the history of Naomi and Ruth, of how Naomi, bereft of having lost to death not only her husband but both of her sons, insisted that people call her “bitter”. She was as distressed and depressed as anyone who had a “right” to. And yet, God moved Ruth to accompany her, to also throw her lot in with God and God’s people, and look what happened! Naomi’s tears of grief were ultimately turned to tears of joy as she took her newly-born grandson, Obed, and became a nurse to him, and he begat Jesse, who begat King David! Praise God!

We’re not told what became of this poor widow, but I can imagine that she became part of the early church, and thereby one of our ancestors in the faith. For she was noticed by the Lord, and He had always been paying attention to her, as He does with all of us. Nothing we do, however “unimportant” does He miss. And just as she put in two mites, the smallest, least valuable coins available, what she did amounted to the mightiest gift given that day and perhaps of all time, to the Temple, that is, to God. And so it is, too, with us. What did Lord Jesus say about serving others? Something as trifling as a cup of cold water He

mentions in Matthew 10:42: “if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of My followers, you will surely be rewarded”. All that’s required is proper attitude.

Consider, in contrast, the priests we read of last week in Malachi 1, and again today in Malachi 2. How God had loved and blessed the Levites because they had honored Him during the Exodus: they “greatly revered Me and stood in awe of My name. ... They did not lie or cheat; they walked with Me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin”. But the priests now, in Malachi’s day, shortly before the Greeks took over the Holy Land, had become corrupt. Malachi 2:8: “you priests have left God’s paths. Your instructions have caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites”. And at the end of that chapter, God further charges them: “You have wearied [God] by saying that all who do evil are good in the Lord’s sight, and He is pleased with them”. And how much so much of today’s apostate church resembles them! It’s no wonder that, like Judah of old then, so is today much of America under God’s judgement. Will we finally sit up and take notice of God’s repeated warnings? We’ve yet to acknowledge our national sins, so how can we wonder why they’re being repeated last week and next month? But, if you and I, cast our lot in with the Lord, and throw in our two mites in faithfulness, God will yet bless us and this land He’s given us. Never give up on Him, because He never gives up on you!

