

On this Veteran's Day, a day when we acknowledge men and women willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, our scripture lessons present people from long ago who demonstrated Unreserved Giving. In our OT lesson, we are introduced to a nameless, impoverished widow who...along with her young son...was one meager meal away from starving to death. Nonetheless and undeterred, this woman recognizes that Elijah was a man of God, believes the otherwise nonsensical prophecy he utters, and without reservation grants his request for '*a small loaf of bread*' from what little she had.

Our Hebrews text reminds us that Jesus Himself was not only willing, but trusted His Father God and actually made the ultimate sacrifice '*to do away with sin*'...your sin and mine. Although admittedly fearful, Jesus was faith-full and was '*obedient unto death, even death on the cross*'. Jesus held nothing back and exemplified Unreserved Giving.

This same Jesus introduces us to, yet, another nameless woman in our Gospel text. Like the woman introduced in our 1 Kings text, this worshiping woman is also described as a '*poor widow*'. There is no mention that she had a son or any other family member, indicating that she was among the lost and forgotten of her day. No one was left to care for her, but this did not deter her faith or her stewardship. Let's not miss the fact of where this brief account takes place, in the temple and, specifically, at '*the temple treasury*'.

As Jesus observed the giving patterns of the people that day, he saw two things: [1] '*Many rich people threw in large amounts.*' [2] This widow '*put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.*' The two 'lepta' [widow's mite] were the smallest copper coins in circulation, as are pennies in our day. Simplifying the account, this poor widow put two pennies in the plate, so to speak. Hardly enough

to even notice, we might imagine, but not for Jesus. He calls *'his disciples to him'* for an important, spontaneous, and ageless teaching moment. Jesus tells them that this widow's offering of two pennies is *'more...than all the others.'*

We might ask: "What sort of an accounting strategy is that? Two pennies are more than *'large amounts'*? We might comment: *"I would have expected the Son of God to have been better at math than that!"* or *"I'm sure thankful Kristi Leeth, a CPA, is our Grace Treasurer, and not Jesus!"*

But, you see, God does not measure our giving by how much we give...rather, God measures the worth of our giving by the proportion that we keep. Giving \$10 is a considerably more significant sacrifice if that is all a person possesses, than giving \$10, while retaining \$100 for oneself. As one author writes: *'The value of the gift is not determined by its inherent cash value, but by what it represents for the giver---a percentage of abundance or one's whole life.'*

Within this account Jesus was doing what Jesus continues to do, namely watching as the worshipers put *'their money into the temple treasury'*. Our own personal stewardship, how and what we give from what God has first given us, is always done within the sight of our Savior. A sparrow falling from the sky does not go unnoticed by God, and neither does our discernment about how we live and give.

As the widow of Zarephath demonstrated Unreserved Giving to Elijah, based solely upon God's Word...As Jesus demonstrated Unreserved Giving as he willingly went to the Calvary Cross for the sins of this world, based solely upon his trust of his heavenly Father...This *'poor widow'*, attending worship in that first century Jerusalem Temple demonstrated Unreserved Giving...*'out of her poverty'* and *'put in everything---all she had to live on.'*

Why? Actually the text doesn't tell us. We are, instead, left to sort of connect the dots in this story in order to arrive at an explanation. She was a widow...she was among the lost and forgotten of society...she had no one on earth to depend upon...she was, according to Jesus, living in poverty...and she, nonetheless, comes faithfully to the temple and *'put in everything---all she had to live on.'* If that's not a demonstration of Unreserved Giving motivated by her faith and trust in God, I have no other explanation to offer. Do you?

Amen.