

## The Widow's mite



By Judy Taylor



The theme for Lent this week is “giving” and one of the most well known stories in the New Testament about giving is that of the Widow’s mite. Jesus is teaching in the temple and among those listening to him were the scribes and Pharisees as always looking for ways to challenge him and discredit his words. Mark tells us that while Jesus was in the temple he was watching the various people who came to put money into the treasury.

Into this environment a poor widow comes and quietly and humbly she makes her way to the temple to worship. She possesses two small copper coins. Mark specifies that two mites (Greek lepta) are the smallest and least valuable Roman coins and this was all the widow had, the smallest and least valuable coins in circulation in Judea. They were everything she had that day. Yet, without hesitation, she quietly and discretely deposits them into the offering box that lined the outer walls of the Temple. Jesus points out to his listeners that the rich made a great play of displaying their wealth and what they were donating for everyone to see, whilst this widow, so humbly placed her offering while being embarrassed or even ashamed of how little she could offer. But Jesus tells his listeners, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” (Mark 12 v43-44)

Then there is the story about the rich young ruler who comes to Jesus asking what he should do to inherit the life of the Age to Come (Mark 10 v 18). The phrase the Kingdom of God is another way of talking about the Age to Come; it is the period of time in which God is at last ruling the world as he has always wanted to. This young man believes he has kept all the commandments laid down by Moses, surely this must count for something? But Jesus tells him to go and sell everything he possesses and give it to the poor and his treasure will be in heaven. (v 21). This treasure Jesus speaks about is not the love of wealth which may have been what Jesus saw in this young man but the love of God. We are not asked to live in destitution with absolutely nothing, no shelter, warmth or food, but it is about how generous, how caring we are towards those who are in need. To give and not to count the cost.

The good Samaritan was commended that he stopped and helped the wounded man on the road. He had some wine to give him. He had a donkey that he would let him ride. He had money for paying for his lodging ([Luke 10:30–35](#)). Jesus didn't question him, saying, "Why do you have a donkey? Why do you have wine? Why do you have money? You're supposed to give everything away." The point was, do you love the person in front of you at a cost to yourself? Change your way of thinking. Do not merely think, "What percentage can I afford?" but rather, "The people that I deal with and that I'm aware of — do I love them as I ought with my resources?" I would suggest that this Samaritan did indeed do everything and more for the wounded man.

Giving to God is not just about money of course, because there are so many ways we can give for instance, giving our time to another which can be very precious in this demanding world. A visit, a phone call even can really lift someone who is struggling to cope, just by the fact that someone else cares enough to get in touch. We all have gifts that God has given us, it maybe the gift of listening, of singing, of practical skills such as cooking, cleaning and gardening all of which are every bit as valuable to God as those we might consider the more prestigious of gifts, powerful speech, financial acumen and others.

When we give unconditionally, in other words not looking for any thanks, recognition or reward we are giving in the way God is asking us to I believe that if we achieve this, we will then discover the "treasure" which Jesus was talking about. This treasure comes from knowing we have given from our heart and that we are blessed and loved by God, what could be a greater gift?!

I would like to end with a prayer I came across recently which I think is so fitting for this theme of giving.

Gracious, abundant and ever giving God, we come before you with hearts full of gratitude, inspired by the story of the humble widow and your teaching on giving. We thank you for the grace that abounds in our lives, for the overflowing generosity you have shown us through creation, through Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and through the countless blessings we experience each day. Help us to remember that all we have is a gift from you, entrusted to us to steward for your purposes. May we use our time, talents and financial resources wisely, generously, and with a cheerful heart, focused on your mission and purposes through the church. May our giving be an act of worship that honours you, blesses others and brings your kingdom to earth.

Amen.