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**Pentecost 25B, November 10, 2024**

**“The Widow’s Might”**

**Read: Mark 12:38–44 and/or Memorize: Mark 12: 43 – 44 NLT**

**How do you measure a life? In worldly weight and measures like dollars and cents or using spiritual scales of love, service, and friendship? In a local supermarket, there are several different candy counters. A big display of all the old favorites greets you just as you turn your cart into the first aisle.**

**At the opposite end of the store is a half wall of bowl candy in big packages for big families or big sweet-eaters. There are racks of typical "movie candies "at the Red Box. Finally, there is one whole display rack located up by the comic books, that hold all the really sweet, gooey, glow-in-the-dark, pop-in-your-mouth candy that little kids adore. Actually, about 75% of the display is devoted to all the various sizes, shapes and packaging forms bubble gum can take.**

**The types of candies at each of these locations appeal to a particular set of standards that motivate different types of candy buyers. Some people would never dream of purchasing anything but an old standard, a Milky Way, a Hershey bar or M&M's. For others, the most important thing is quantity, not quality. For them, there is no possibility of getting too much of a good thing.**

**Those eating sweets as a strictly "special" indulgence, purchase their goodies as part of their "entertainment package." For children, the standard of taste is replaced by the standard of fun; fun shapes, fun colors, fun things you can do with the package when it's empty.**

**The reality is, we all have different standards, different ways of weighing out and determining what is good and what is not. Standards of taste, tasteless and tasteful are as varied as there are individuals to establish them. Yet there are certain standards, we can all recognize as high or denounce as low. Years ago, many of us learned about 90210. Anybody recognize what it stands for? You may not remember this, but perhaps if I told you a name, it might all come back to you. It's the zip code of Beverly Hills. Beverly Hills is not just an address. Beverly Hills is a lifestyle.**

Although we may not want to admit it, we are a society that judges things and people according to monetary value. If it costs more, it's probably better. That is why some colleges raised their tuitions, to set themselves apart and they saw their enrollments swell. Those who applied thought, if it costs more, it must be better.

Whatever happened to the beauty of simple gifts, the dignity of small gestures, the grace to appreciate goodwill and good wishes. What is it with this demand for the grand and the ostentatious? I don't know if it was McDonald's who coined it first, "supersize," many followed. Supersize, superabundance and superfluous made up the "standards" for a while.

The challenge that greets disciples of Jesus is whether or not we can buck this big buck system. Jesus' declaration that the pittance poured down the trumpet spout by a faithful widow is more generous than all the spilling-over riches of the gifts that had gone before her, calls us to sit up and take notice.

To make any sense of what He said, we must radically adjust our system. Christ's challenge to us in this text is literally to let the scales "fall from our eyes." Can we judge life according to a different set of scales than worldly weights and measures, or dollars and cents, or stocks and bonds?

Some have even tried to revise the understanding of that widow's gift. According to one commentary, the widow is a pawn in the hands of a greedy, grasping religious establishment. The Gift was word – whipped out of her by that establishment. Perhaps, that is more about our 21st-century standards than any issues that may be behind us for a first century text.

In some sense, we may be at fault for some of our own problem. Anyone who has listened to economic theory lately has heard that the US economy is primarily based on consumer spending. So, we consumers wield enormous power. In the cutthroat competitive marketplace, anyone with a product to sell must market it expertly, making it as "user-friendly" as possible. Consumers demand big bangs for their bucks. We insist on getting something more as well. Some freebie that makes us think we're getting a deal.

You may not recognize it in yourself, until you think about some purchases you've made recently. Buy a dozen bagels, get one free. Why get a medium fry, when for only \$.20 more you can get the large size? I think you get the idea, so I don't have to say more.

The standards that calibrate our 21st-century scales weigh up the gift of the poor widow and find it pathetically light; virtually meaningless. We look at the amount she gave as both

nothing and everything, and we judge it against where she gave it, to the temple treasury set up to perpetuate a religious life and cultic style that Jesus declared was bankrupt.

What happens if we let the scales that blind us fall from our eyes? What happens if we use a set of standards not based on monetary values or worldly success ratings to view this text? We see a devoted woman, not afraid to give all she has to God. Jesus proclaimed that this woman had made a genuine sacrifice, had given her "whole life" because of her faith.

We look ahead to a vision of Jesus hanging on the cross making the ultimate sacrifice, giving His "whole" life for the sake of yet another bankrupt institution, known as the human race. If you blink really hard, you can do it too. It's not too hard to understand that the widow's mite is the might of love.

There are some names that we recognize almost immediately. One such, is Mother Theresa. Born of Albanian parents, she went to India in 1929 as a member of the Sisters of Loretto order of nuns. She taught for many years. She became head mistress of a school.

In 1946, she received her "call within a call" to work with the poorest of the poor. She became a nurse, eventually left the Sisters of Loretto to carry out her calling. She prayed, "Oh God, if I cannot help these people in their poverty and their suffering, let me at least die with them, close to them, so that I can show them your love."

She would go on to found the Missionaries of Charity, which has grown to include 4,000 sisters and brothers, 755 homes, and 1,369 medical clinics that serve 120,000 people worldwide. Mother Teresa's mite has might, and it's the might of love.

The dilemma is, we hear stories like that and we start thinking that unless we can do something that will change the whole world, it's worthless. We mislead ourselves into believing we are incapable of making that type of impact. We are not ready to make that big a commitment, so there's no sense in doing anything else.

But perhaps we can have a different vision. There's a gentleman who lives in Leola, Pennsylvania, who has driven his truck to New York City for 35 years, a six-hour round-trip, to deliver food to the bowery mission, located in one of the seedier sections of Manhattan.

His truck is loaded with produce, canned meats and pastries, which the Mennonite farmers and businesses near to his town have donated. He says that people trust him with the food he takes, and his reward is to see all the happy faces when the food arrives.

Perhaps, there's something even closer to home. A whole lot of you baked and made a whole lot of goodies that another whole lot of people were able to make a donation for on Election Day that will allow us to purchase the food for food baskets. Next month, somewhere between 25 – 50 people will come together and divide up the almost \$4,000 worth of food, to help provide meals for about 200 people at Christmas time.

People are often surprised when they come to pick up their baskets. They assume they're going to get one basket. Depending on the size of the family, they might receive anywhere from 2 to 8 boxes of food, making a big difference for families at Christmas time. Along with food we invite them to join us at Christmas worship because because this gift represents Jesus' love and we'd love for them to know Him also.

How do you measure your life? What is the scale you are using? Are you using the scales of love to measure life? What would happen if you began to measure your life by the acts of love that fill it? Would you find yourself "rich" or "poor?"

As Christians, recipients of the greatest gift of love ever, the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, we are truly rich beyond imagination. Can we, like the poor widow, find the courage to share the wealth we hold? Can we stop dribbling out stores of love, selflessness, sacrifice and compassion and dare to pour them out whole hearted, into the love-starved coffers of this world?

Jesus called us to make a difference. Not only does He call us, but he enables us. He promises that if we will ask, He will provide all we need and more, to help change people's lives. We call it: "Everyday Disciples: Sharing Christ, Changing Lives!" Join us in taking that journey together!

Count me in: Because you know the generous love of Jesus, how will you share generously with others?