



Gospel Mk 12:38-44

or (shorter form Mk 12:41-44)

This poor widow has put more in than all who contributed.

In his teaching Jesus said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.'

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny. Then he called to his disciples and said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'

Reflection by Greg Sunter

We would normally hear or read the second half of this week's gospel as a stand alone example of generosity and faith – often without the section that immediately precedes it. Whilst the actions of the widow are certainly worthy of comment, when we read it in the context of the condemnation that immediately precedes it, the widow's offering is placed in a different light. Jesus condemns the scribes who parade their wealth and seek trappings of earthly power and glory: being recognised and greeted as they walk the streets; taking the front seats in synagogue; and expecting to be seated in the place of honour at banquets. Whilst parading their wealth and feasting at banquets, they are also swallowing up the property of widows – taking advantage of those in need. We often hear widows and orphans named in the scriptures as those in need. Widows and orphans (and strangers in the land) are marked out for special attention in the Torah. They are named as deserving of special care – the lost and broken of society. So despite holding a special place in Jewish Law and tradition, the widows are being taken advantage of by the scribes, who are taking over their property for their own gain. One of the duties of the scribes was to administer the proper payment of Temple taxes. The treasury referred to in the passage is the Temple treasury. Rather than a great act of generosity, we can now see the widow's payment of Temple tax as a burdensome, heart-wrenching obligation to pay the very last coins she had to a corrupt, uncaring system. We usually read praise into Jesus' comments about the widow's offering, but it can also be read as moral outrage at the system that demands this woman pay all that she possesses to the Temple.

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The Living Word

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

7 November 2021

First Reading 1 Kgs 17:10-16

The widow made a little scone from her flour meal and brought it to Elijah.

Elijah the Prophet went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks; addressing her he said, 'Please bring a little water in a vessel for me to drink.' She was setting off to bring it when he called after her. 'Please' he said, 'bring me a scrap of bread in your hand.' 'As the Lord your God lives', she replied, 'I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.' But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and for your son. For thus the Lord speaks, the God of Israel:

"Jar of meal shall not be spent,
jug of oil shall not be emptied,
before the day when the Lord sends
rain on the face of the earth."

The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as the Lord had foretold through Elijah.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 145:7-10. R.v.2

(R.) *Praise the Lord, my soul!*

or

(R.) *Alleluia!*

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith forever who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord who sets prisoners free. (R.)

2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down.
It is the Lord who loves the just, the Lord who protects the stranger. (R.)
3. The Lord upholds the widow and orphan
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The Lord will reign for ever,
Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

Second Reading Heb 9:24-28

Christ offered himself only once to take the faults of many on himself.

It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modelled on the real one; but it was heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf. And he does not have to offer himself again and again, like the high priest going into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. Instead of that, he has made his appearance once and for all, now at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Since men only die once, and after that comes judgement, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him.

Gospel Acclamation Mt 5:3

Alleluia, alleluia!

Happy the poor in spirit;

the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Alleluia!