

## Sermon: Sharing Your 2¢

Year B, Proper 27

[Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17; Psalm 127; 1 Kings 17:8-16; Psalm 146; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44](#)

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It's the season of Stewardship where we ask for your pledge. Of course we're going to read the Widow's Mite. She puts in her two pennies, a lovely example to us all. No gift is too small. Give until it hurts because after all Jesus is praising this woman who put in everything she had (Mark 12:44). Easy. Done. We've all heard that sermon.

Here I am, in my long robe that I can't do any real work in.<sup>1</sup> Here I am with a seat right up front, and with the best seat and the nicest plate of tidbits at book club, my health care paid for by this church. All I have to do on this full, full day is preach that sermon and we're good to go. We can pass the plate, gather up some more pledge forms, say a prayer and go down to coffee hour.

Except that I can't do that to her, that widow who has come down to us over the years. Especially, honestly, I can't do that to her *again*, strip mining her life for our fundraising needs, sending her home to empty cupboards until we need her again in another pledge drive.<sup>2</sup> I can't put her on a pedestal, turn her into a poster granny. We put her on a pedestal, and her life is separate, disconnected from ours.<sup>3</sup> She's making the sacrifice, something we're all fans of, so long as it's someone else who's doing it.<sup>4</sup> We tell ourselves that our lives aren't really configured to make sacrifices like that, so let's put her on a pedestal, right next to our veterans, by the way. If we can keep them on pedestals, then we don't have to do the hard, dirty work of figuring out how her life *is* our life, how they're connected in a real way, just like our lives and the lives of our veterans.

I can't put her on a pedestal and I can't pretend not to notice that the "give-until-it-hurts" interpretation of her story completely ignores the Scriptural context for this story. Her story is set in the Temple in Jerusalem. In the Gospel of Mark, it is the ending story of Jesus' public ministry. If I had let Lindsey keep reading, in the next breath, we would have heard Jesus say that soon, *not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down* (Mark 13:2). Jesus sees the Temple as corrupt, as a den of thieves (Matthew 21:13). He should chastise the widow for giving her money to an institution that is failing to be what God was calling it to be.<sup>5</sup> But he doesn't. He praises her. He praises her for giving all that she had.

Because that's what Jesus is about to do. He is going to give all that he has for people who are failing to be who God is calling them to be. For the disciples. For the widow at the Temple. For you and me. Our lives are connected. And yes, they are imperfect, messy, far from what God means for them to be. No one is perfect. No one is on a pedestal. Jesus wouldn't put himself

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 300.

<sup>2</sup> André Resner Jr., "Reading the Text for Economic Justice: Mark 12:38-44 for Stewardship Season." *The Living Pulpit* 12, no. 2 (2003): 7.

<sup>3</sup> Emilie M. Townes, "Proper 27, Theological Perspective, Mark 12:38-44" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B, Volume 4*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009], 286.

<sup>4</sup> Townes, 286.

<sup>5</sup> Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1983): 234.

there either. When we give all that we have, in the face of human fallibility and imperfection, we come closer to the Kingdom of God.

Casey gave us a chance to see how our lives connect with the work that's being done at His Mansion. Bob gave us a chance to see how our lives connect with the lives of the veterans around us. Those connections require us to bring our empathy and understanding, our open heartedness. We are so much more than money. Money is just one way of showing that we understand that our lives are connected to one another. Please, pledge money to the church.

But understand what Jesus is looking for in all of us. Jesus wants us to stay connected to flawed, imperfect people and institutions. Jesus wants us to stay connected with more than just financial relationships. Jesus wants us to stay connected through words and deeds and forgiveness and repentance and, sure, money. In the end, money is never going to be enough. Jesus wants us to give everything we have. Not because he wants to send us home to empty cupboards. Jesus wants us to have truly abundant lives, full to overflowing. Lives where we give all that we have and find ourselves connected in all ways to each other and to God.