

Mark 12:38-44
Pentecost 25
St Mark - November 10, 2024
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Full of the Holy Spirit

Mark 12:38-44

As Jesus taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, “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.”

Full of the Holy Spirit

Jesus is in the temple as he speaks of the scribes’ pride and greed and then of the generosity of a poor widow.

Signs of monetary wealth such as fine clothing, opulent homes, and glutenous living abound in those who don’t follow Jesus. When those are the things that become most important God is pushed away. Signs of spiritual wealth such as generous giving, service to those in need, and humility are the signs of Jesus touching the soul.

So the question becomes: will we be full of ourselves or full of the Holy Spirit?

Our reading is an opportunity to talk about our own contribution to God’s purpose. God knows, probably better than we do, what that contribution is. It’s only through self-searching thought that we are able to see both our successes and failures as we strive to live God’s will for us.

Are we full of ourselves or full of the Holy Spirit?

How do we support the work of the church; the church that is the body of Christ?

Will we sacrifice in God's service or will our gift be a mere afterthought? Something given little thought or attention like the contributions of the rich people in our reading.

The poor widow gave all she had and the wealthy gave large sums, but given their wealth it seems that it wasn't enough to make them even take notice. The poor widow's gift was sacrificial; the rich sacrificed nothing.

What gifts do I give to the service of God? It's an important question to ask ourselves.

Gifts to God's work come in several forms and are often referred to as falling into three groups: time, treasure, and talent.

We give our time when we visit someone who is lonely or needs a little help. Sacrificial giving is when we postpone or give up something we wanted to do and instead take someone to a much needed appointment.

Treasure refers to our financial commitment. Our contribution to maintaining the buildings, personnel, and other expenses of our congregation.

The gift of our talents is abundant in our congregation. Preparing and serving food, creating and maintaining gardens, compassionate care given to others, these are just a few of the talents and time that are freely shared by our congregation.

When Jesus speaks of the entitled and pompous behavior of the scribes he says they will be condemned then follows this with the poor widow's sacrifice of everything she had. Like many of Jesus' lessons he speaks in extremes to make his point.

He's telling us to hold on to humility. To let our fine clothing and the respect shown to us by others and all the other blessings of our life never go to our heads.

He expects us to do our very best for others.

He's telling us to sacrifice to make our support for His work in the world meaningful and more important than worldly pleasures.

It will cost this congregation about 50 thousand dollars this year to keep the lights on, maintain our buildings, and pay people as the need arises. Our financial contributions will cover those expenses, but those contributions are probably not all we give to the work of the church (that is to God's work).

When we donate to St. Jude's, Starting Points, The American Red Cross, Boy's Home, our local food bank or any other life-saving effort we are making a contribution to God's work. We are giving of our resources for the care of others.

Opening our buildings for our worship services and the various activities of our congregation and others in our community is a testimony to the power of God in our lives. But our commitment to God in the way we live our lives is a more powerful testimony still.

For most of us it will not be our life's blood in service to God that is required of us, but for all of us it is our time, money, and energy, that God desires. It is the Godly way we live our lives, and the gracious way we serve others that God required.

The question remains, will we be full of ourselves or full of the Holy Spirit?

God the Holy Spirit gives us life. I pray that each of us will live our life in service to Him.

Amen.