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Homily Reflections – Gospel of Mark 12:38-44

Introduction: Does my Giving Reflect My Faith?

This Sunday, we come to the end of our readings from Mark's Gospel. This passage stops just on the threshold of prophecies about the end times and judgment (next weekend) and the final coming of Jesus—the Feast of Christ the King (the weekend after)—which concludes this liturgical year.

This Gospel passage opens with Jesus warning the crowds not to follow the example of the scribes in seeking honor and attention from others. (This is in sharp contrast from the "good scribe" of last week who asked which is the greatest commandment.) Mark continues to highlight the mounting tension between Jesus and the Jewish authorities and indicates that Jesus taught these things while in the vicinity of the Temple. Mark is setting the stage for Jesus' passion in his concluding chapters. Jesus then observes how Jewish pilgrims are making their contributions to the temple treasury. The Temple was the center of Jewish worship. It was expected that observant Jews would make a pilgrimage to the Temple annually to offer prayers and sacrifices. Pilgrims were also expected to make a financial contribution to the temple treasury.

As Jesus was sitting facing the treasury and watching the people putting in their offerings, he called the disciples' attention to a poor woman who dropped in two coins of negligible value. She was a widow. In those times, a widow was often reduced to poverty because she could no longer produce children, was regarded practically as a non-person, and was even rejected by her husband's family. Yet, poor as she was, this widow puts in two coins (not one). That was her livelihood! Jesus upholds the poor widow's offering for his disciples' consideration, commending her because her small offering was an act of profound generosity. She gave from her livelihood rather than her surplus. It was also an act of total trust in God.

Whereas, in contrast, those who were wealthier were contributing from their surplus. They were giving what they could easily spare. Loose change?

How would I rate my financial giving? My stewardship of the financial resources I possess?

It has been pointed out by Scripture scholars that she put in two coins. Given her

situation, she would have been more than justified in putting in just one. Here Mark seems to be comparing her to the young rich man (in his Gospel several weeks ago) who could not part with his wealth to follow Jesus. He simply could not "throw in his lot."

Am I afraid of "throwing in my lot" with Jesus?

It has also been pointed out by scholars that this anonymous woman is, in a way, a symbol of Jesus himself. He also will "empty himself," give away everything, including his life. It seems no accident that Mark places this brief story just here as Jesus enters on his final days in the final Gospel chapters.

Does your budget reflect an "emptying of yourself?"

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder words from the *Gospel of Mark 12:38-44.*

What word or words caught your attention?
What in this passage comforted/challenged you?

Further Questions and Reflections:

Today's Gospel concentrates on the question of truth. The truth about being true to who we are, rather than presenting an image of ourselves that we think makes us look good. *Do I think too much about what others think of me?*

Jesus proclaims that the widow has given more than all the rich people. In a very real way, *this story is a summary of the whole Gospel. Why is that? Explain.*

Ponder*: Is Jesus holding the widow up as a model to be imitated or as a victim of religious exploitation? Is he speaking words of praise or lamentation?*
What values do I use to measure success in my life?

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