

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY MARCH 8, 2020

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"The Tragedy of the Unopened Gift

Based on Mark 12:41-44

Whether I'm a five-talent, two-talent, or one-talent person is not what counts in the long run...I must come to identify, cultivate, invest, prize, and enjoy the gifts that have been given me.

~John Ortberg

She was a widow. And she was poor. And while these two words set the parameters of her life, there was so much more to her that struggled for breath between those two words. Once, she had had a home of her own, a husband who provided for her, children to hug, and laugh with. But that was then, and this was now. Her husband was dead. She was entirely dependent on others. Her children were grown and gone. And so it was that day followed day, and night followed night.

She was frustrated. She was angry that the wheels of chance had brought her to this place. She felt unappreciated, un-needed, unwanted. She lived a life that was a shell of what she believed she could be.

She felt trapped by a world that said, "This is how a poor widow lives!"

Because she was more than what the world said she was.

So, not for the first time, when the world seemed to press heavily upon her spirit, the widow made time in her day to go to the temple, the only place in her small world, that offered some calm to the excruciating slow death dance she was playing with life. Yet even there, the world in all its excess, in all its pomp and circumstance, in all its vanity, flashed before her:

"Many rich men dropped in a lot of money" (v41b)

**"...BUT SHE,
POOR AS SHE
IS, PUT IN ALL
SHE HAD..."**

~MARK 12:44

Well dressed, well heeled, 'important' people, jingling their gold coins all the way to the offering box to make sure everyone could see, and everyone could hear, just how important they really were to the community, and to the

temple. All this made the widow more frustrated, and feel even smaller than she already did. So she slipped quietly to the back of the temple after saying her prayers, her shabby cloak with its twice mended hem dragging on the stone floor. She took her two small coins, and her frustration, and her anger and her disappointments, and with barely a sound, dropped the small coins beside the gold.

But, some of the weight lifted from the widow's heart. She breathed deeply, and felt a calm wash over her as she left the temple and began the walk home to the rest of the day that would follow day, and night that would follow night.

Jesus watched this, a short distance away, and said to his disciples:

"I tell you that this poor widow put more in the offering box than all the others. (v43.)

"This widow *"gave all she had"* (v44). She gave all she had.

This is not just a story about money. Nor is it a story designed for the sweep of Christian guilt for all that we

have and do not give away or share. This is a story about giving fully of ourselves to our Saviour. This is a story about trust. The widow not only gave her coins, but gave herself, her honest self: with her frustrations and her anger and all that was not the best side of herself; she gave it all over to her God, and trusted that what came next was hopeful, spirit-filled and of God's design.

Can you say the same?

- Do you, give fully, to your Saviour?
- Do you share the talents you were given, and give back to the world around you?
- Do you push yourself a little, to see if there is something new the Saviour would like you to learn or do?
- Do you open your heart wide, even if it means feeling vulnerable, and there is the possibility you might be hurt?

Or do you hold something of yourself back, 'just in case'...

- Do you only share, when you are sure to get praise and kudos for your effort...
- Do you only give when you get something back in return...
- Do you only make the effort when important people are watching...

- Do you only try, when you are sure you will succeed...
- Do you, give fully, to your Saviour?
- Do you give 'all' that you are, and 'all' that you could ever be over to the Saviour's will?

Because, my friends,

- Our Saviour does not give us half of His love, but 'all' of it.
- Our Saviour does not give us some grace, but moment upon moment upon moment of grace, each and every time you stumble and fall and fail and struggle.
- Our Saviour does not challenge us to see half a sunrise, but to experience the full blossoming of a day filled with rich beauty and a blazing sunset to complete it all, only to rest in the night and start again the next day with the same wonder and delight.
- Our Saviour does not wish us to live half a life, but a full life, every day, with what we have, with what we can share, and with what we can learn.

This is what the widow 'gave' that day at the temple.
She trusted God.
She did not know what tomorrow might bring.

But she would live it fully, and breathe it deeply.
She would hold nothing back.

Rich or poor.
Popular or shy.
Talented or timid.
The widow gave 'all.'

Can you?



The material in this Lenten Series is based on the book, "If you Want to Walk on Water, You Have to Get Out of the Boat" by John Ortberg.