

PARK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
23RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
REV. JOHN L. THOMPSON
“GOOD NEWS FOR WIDOWS”
Mark 12:38-44
November 8, 2009
11:00 A.M. Service

The Bible really does have some good news for widows. We all can agree that it's not easy losing a spouse. It can leave a void that nothing will ever fill. But here's the good news. Jesus is aware of your situation, and of your faithfulness to the church.

Any church that has a high percentage of older people will likely have many widows on fixed incomes. What this means is that a significant percentage of a congregation's annual budget is paid by those on fixed incomes. Since we have some widows in our congregation, I think it would be helpful if we sought them out and discovered why they are such consistent supporters of the ministries of this church. We cannot afford to overlook the vibrant faith of these widows on fixed incomes who support this church.

Now the actual amount of the dollars given to the church is not the issue I wish to highlight, but rather, the level of her commitment to Christ that is far greater than the size of the gift. I have spoken with several widows in the church who have shared their pain in not being able to give as much as they have in the past because of changing circumstances in their lives. Some may consider a pledge meager when compared to what others may give, but nevertheless, it is a pledge from the heart. And that makes a difference.

The Gospel of Mark tells a story of extraordinary faith and commitment. Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were gathered and

watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, *“I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.”*

In biblical times widows lead extremely difficult lives. Most widows today are somewhat provided for. Not so in Bible times. A widow was completely dependent on her family. She could not inherit from her husband. If she had no children, she returned to her father’s house. If she had no family, she was indeed in trouble. There were no jobs for widows. There was no Social Security system, no welfare system. It is common knowledge today that many single mothers fall below the poverty line. The plight of widows in biblical times was much more desperate. They were literally in danger of starving to death.

The widow that Jesus observed was in desperate circumstances. She was down to her last two coins . . . and she gave them to God! What amazing faith. The widow was down to her last two coins and she gave them to God. Why would she give her last two coins? What was going on here?

The poor widow didn’t have much in the way of material possessions, but she was clear about her priorities. **I would imagine she felt that God came first in her life.** And she believed that **her gift would make a difference.** What she was giving might have seemed very small to her neighbors, but like the little boy who gave his fishes and loaves to the Master, this widow knew her gift would make a difference.

There are some who will not make a pledge because they will consider what they are able to give may be too small. The widow made God the first priority in her life. She knew that God would use her gift, however small.

And one last thing: her faithfulness touched others. That's no small thing. Every time this story is told her example touches a new generation of believers. Think about that! Of course, this act would still have been important if only those closest to her were aware of her devotion.

Pensal McCray is a widow of this church who has enabled almost 2000 high school graduates to attend college. She didn't do it because she has a lot of money. She does it because it is her passion. I have met some of those young people that she has helped over the years. From small gifts she has been able to make a difference in the life of some struggling young students.

Yes, every gift makes a difference because even a little goes a long way. The widow in the Gospel made God first in her life. She knew that, though she had little to give, that little would make a difference. And she touched many lives. That which we give to God is ours for all eternity.

Yes! Today is about giving. And it doesn't matter that you may not have a lot of money to give. What matters is that you are willing to give whatever you can afford. And if you are among those like the widow in the Gospel story; I would love to be your pastor. I would love for this to be your church.