



LOVE MATTERS – Season Gratitude & Giving Week 2: November 7, 2021

Through the Gospel of Mark, in the closing days of the liturgical year, the message from Jesus is clear: Love is our calling – all in - heart, soul, mind, strength. All the Commandments, all the lessons of Discipleship and Stewardship are at the core, matters of the heart. This is fitting Scripture to enter into the season of gratitude and giving. We thank God for all our blessings, and we express that in many different ways.

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time 1 KGS 17:10-16 • HEB 9:24-28 • MK 12:38-44

In the course of his teaching Jesus said to the crowds,
"Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers.

They will receive a very severe condemnation." He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury.

Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Today's First Reading from the First Book of Kings, as well as the passage from Mark, both center on the actions of two poor widows. The Gospel is often called the story of the "Widow's Mite." But taken together, perhaps a more fitting title of the stories of these two ladies would be, "The Mighty Widows."

These women saw themselves as stewards, not owners, of the resources God gave, regardless of how much or how little they had. And acting as stewards made them gracious, generous, and mighty indeed.

In our First Reading, the prophet Elijah encounters a widow during a terrible famine. The visitor Elijah, acting as God's messenger, asks her to give him something to eat before preparing a meal for herself and her son. In an extraordinary act of trust — and heroic hospitality — she agrees! Elijah assures her that her "jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the Lord sends rain upon the earth." Sure enough, the widow and her son were able to eat for a year, just as God promised.

In the Gospel, Jesus observes crowd make their offerings to the synagogue treasury. The wealthy put in large sums, while a poor widow contributes two small coins. Jesus tells His disciples that according to His calculations, the widow who has made the most pleasing offering. Unlike the rich, who gave a portion of their surplus, the widow gave all she had, “her whole livelihood.”

Each woman each found themselves in desperate situations —yet each demonstrated strength and generosity that distinguished them from those around them. From where did this strength come? It came from knowing who they are, and Whose they are.

MIGHTY MATTERS OF THE HEART - GIVING & GRATITUDE

- In the first reading, the widow is told in a crisis situation, “Do not be afraid, the Lord will provide.” **Recall an experience when “your back was to the wall”, but you trusted the Lord to provide and He did.**
- In the first reading and the Gospel, we are introduced to two widows...by custom, strangers were to be offered hospitality, charity to be given to widows and orphans. If widows had no sons, widows had to be taken care of by the next male kin of the deceased husband – or seen as worse, sent back to their fathers. Yet widows play an important role in salvation history – God provides for widows out of his limitless love and values their generosity more than kings. **Who are the contemporary “widows” of our society? The problem people who struggle to find a place? How can we help break the “stigma”?**
- In the Gospel, Jesus condemns the Pharisees for seeking to take places of honor and draw attention to themselves. **Has that ever been you? What can help us to do good without seeking attention or applause?**
- Jesus is interested in our attitude towards giving. The widow did not make a big show of it. She possessed the spirit of great sacrifice. She put in all she possessed. God is interested in our attitude and not only in our money, time, and talents. Giving shows generosity. It is an act of worship. Jesus knows everything about us. Jesus watched the people as they gave just as He is watching us today. Jesus knew her heart and He knows our hearts.
- Do you know that prayer is mentioned about 350 times in the Bible? Love is mentioned more that 700 times? Money is mentioned more that 2000 times? **What is your attitude about giving? Do you see it as an act of worship? What helps you to be a good steward of your time, treasure and talent? Do you have different attitudes about each?**

STEWARDS OF LOVE PRAYER

Gracious and loving God,
You call us to be the stewards of Your abundance,
the caretakers of all You have entrusted to us.
Help us always to use Your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously.
May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the saving love of Christ in our lives.
We pray with hearts overflowing with gratitude,
in Jesus' name. Amen.

*References include
AscensionCatholic.net;
CatholicSteward.com*