

Operating Out of the Wisdom of Poverty

Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time -Mark 12: 38-44

“Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributions to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had.”

There is no soft selling the message that Jesus proclaims. He is all about the poor and their place as first in the Kingdom of God. The lesson gleaned from this week's gospel provides a distinct image of the poor widow and her small contribution to the temple treasury as a far greater gift than the sums given by the wealthy. The message really isn't about how much one gives. Rather, the message is about the wisdom of poverty.

To truly be “poor” one must surrender to the understanding that nothing is truly mine. Nothing on this earth belongs to me. If I can gain that insight, then I can operate out of the wisdom of poverty where I am totally dependent on God.

This is the faith that the widow lived. She had nothing. Yet, she trusted God enough to give herself totally, surrendering to a power greater than her, believing that God would provide for her needs.

Jesus sets up this teaching by first naming the false piety that is embraced by some of the religious leaders, **“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.”** Jesus challenges their practice of devotion while at the same time he also challenges their exploitation of the poor. In essence, Jesus is saying that these two practices cannot coexist. These practices do not lead to faith.

According to Jesus, what leads one to faith is the understanding that we are all dependent on God for our existence, our livelihood and our blessings. Surrendering to the wisdom of poverty will result in our total dependence on God and a renewed faith and possibly a new world.

Blessings!

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