

**Mark 12:38-44**

**November 11, '18**

**“THE WIDOW’S MIGHT”**

**SINCE ELECTION DAY THIS PAST TUESDAY, I’VE DONE SOME SOUL-SEARCHING.**

**I SPENT TIME REFLECTING ON THE FACT THAT I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING AS PASTOR OF THIS CONGREGATION FOR 7 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS & 7 MID-TERM ELECTIONS.**

**I HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO BE EXTREMELY CONSCIENTIOUS IN THE MANNER IN WHICH POLITICAL ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED FROM THIS PULPIT.**

**I CONSIDER US TO BE A SO-CALLED “PURPLE” CHURCH, MEANING WE HAVE A LOT OF FOLKS WHO WOULD IDENTIFY WITH THE RED SIDE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM & A LOT WHO WOULD IDENTIFY WITH THE BLUE SIDE.**

**PARTIALLY FOR THAT REASON, I HAVE ALWAYS ATTEMPTED TO BE VERY SENSITIVE TO THAT DIVIDE & RESPECTFUL OF VARIOUS POINTS OF VIEW.**

**AS A RESULT OF MY RECENT SOUL-SEARCHING, I WANT TO OFFER A PERSONAL APOLOGY IF, OVER THE**

**COURSE OF THOSE 14 ELECTION CYCLES – OR AT ANY OTHER TIME - ANYONE HAS BEEN HURT OR OFFENDED BY VIEWS EXPRESSED FROM THIS PULPIT THAT HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED AS POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED.**

**WHETHER IT HAS BEEN ME OR SOMEONE ELSE EXPRESSING THOSE HURTFUL & OFFENSIVE VIEWS, THE RESPONSIBILITY LIES WITH ME AS YOUR PASTOR & I AM SINCERELY SORRY.**

**I KNOW THERE ARE CHURCHES THAT *DO* SPEAK OPENLY ABOUT POLITICS – PRESENTING ONE VIEW OR THE OTHER – AND I SUPPOSE, IN MANY CASES, THAT’S WHY SOME PEOPLE ATTEND THOSE CHURCHES.**

**THAT’S NOT WHO WE ARE, THOUGH, AND I THINK THAT’S ALSO ONE OF THE REASONS *YOU* ATTEND *HERE* – BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU WON’T BE SUBJECTED TO POLITICAL STATEMENTS ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER.**

**MOST OF YOU WOULDN’T WANT THAT – EVEN IF IT WAS A VIEW YOU SUPPORTED – BECAUSE YOU’D REALIZE THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE WOULD FIND IT HURTFUL & OFFENSIVE AND WE HAVE TOO MUCH LOVE & RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER TO EVER WANT TO HURT OR OFFEND A FELLOW CHURCH MEMBER.**

**SO, IF IT AT ANY TIME THAT *HAS* HAPPENED – IT’S BEEN UNINTENTIONAL AND, AGAIN, AS YOUR PASTOR, I APOLOGIZE FOR IT.**

**LET ME ALSO SAY, THOUGH, THAT WHILE I WILL APOLOGIZE FOR A *POLITICAL* VIEW BEING PROMOTED FROM THIS PULPIT, I WILL NEVER APOLOGIZE FOR PROMOTING THE *GOSPEL* FROM THIS PULPIT.**

**AND THERE, IT SEEMS, IS WHERE THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY ARISES.**

**THERE ARE OCCASIONS – ON A VERY REGULAR BASIS, I MIGHT ADD – WHEN I FIND MYSELF IN SERMON PREPARATION BEING RELUCTANT TO INCLUDE SOMETHING IN A MESSAGE OUT OF FEAR THAT SOMEONE MIGHT BE OFFENDED BY IT.**

**THE GUIDELINE THAT I HAVE ALWAYS RELIED UPON IS THAT IF SOMETHING IS CLEARLY A TEACHING THAT CHRIST WOULD SUPPORT, I HAVE TO PUT THAT FEAR ASIDE & LET THE GOSPEL SPEAK FOR ITSELF.**

**IF SOMEONE IS OFFENDED BY THE GOSPEL, IT FALLS IN LINE WITH WHAT WE READ IN SCRIPTURE.**

**IN FIRST PETER, WE FIND THE LEADER OF THE DISCIPLES, SAY THAT THE GOSPEL IS “*A STONE OF STUMBLING & A ROCK OF OFFENSE.*”**

**THIS PASSAGE IN MARK’S GOSPEL IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF A STORY IN THE BIBLE THAT CAN BE VERY OFFENSIVE.**

**THE ONE THIS STORY OFFENDS IS.....ME.**

**THESE OPENING WORDS ARE HARSH!**

**LISTEN TO WHAT JESUS SAYS HERE: “*THEY (THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE) DEVOUR WIDOWS’ HOUSES & FOR THE SAKE OF APPEARANCE SAY LONG PRAYERS...*”**

**WITH THESE WORDS, HE’S TALKING TO US, ISN’T HE?**

**MORE SPECIFICALLY, HE’S TALKING TO ME.**

**LOOK AT WHAT HE SAYS – COULD IT BE MORE OBVIOUS?!**

**HE’S TELLING US – HE’S TELLING *YOU* – TO BEWARE OF THE GUYS IN THE LONG ROBES.**

**BEWARE OF THOSE WHO EXPECT TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.**

**BEWARE OF THOSE WHO SIT IN THE BEST SEAT IN THE SANCTUARY.**

**BEWARE OF THOSE WHO GO ON & ON IN THEIR PRAYERS!**

**HE CONTRASTS ME – AND MANY OF YOU – WITH THIS POOR WIDOW – A WIDOW WHO GAVE EVERYTHING SHE HAD TO GOD.**

**I DON'T THINK THIS PASSAGE, THOUGH, IS AS MUCH ABOUT *GIVING* AS IT IS ABOUT *TRUST*.**

**THE ONLY WAY TO EVEN BEGIN TO COMPREHEND THE ABSURDITY OF WHAT THIS WOMAN DID IS TO UNDERSTAND IT AS THE ULTIMATE STATEMENT OF TRUST.**

**WHAT SHE GAVE WAS NEGLIGIBLE.**

**IT WAS SIMPLY A FEW CENTS.**

**IT WAS THE SMALLEST OF ALL COINS.**

**TO PUT IT IN TODAY'S TERMS, EACH OF THOSE 2 COINS WOULDN'T AMOUNT TO A NICKEL!**

**BUT WHAT SHE DID WITH THAT NICKEL IS TRULY ASTOUNDING.**

**WE TRADITIONALLY REFER TO THIS STORY AS "THE WIDOW'S MITE" – M-I-T-E.**

**WHAT SHE DID, THOUGH, SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE US THINK OF THIS STORY AS “THE WIDOW’S MIGHT” – M-I-G-H-T.**

**SHE SHOWS HERSELF TO BE VERY MIGHTY IN GOD’S KINGDOM, EVEN WITH THE LITTLE SHE HAD TO GIVE.**

**SHE MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION NOT TO PLAY IT SAFE.**

**SHE WAS LEFT WITH NOTHING & YET SHE FEELS SHE HAS EVERYTHING.**

**SHE HAS ALLOWED HERSELF TO EXPERIENCE LIFE AS A BLESSING AND GOD AS THE ONE WHO BLESSES – ABUNDANTLY, DRAMATICALLY, EXTRAVAGANTLY.**

**MORE IMPORTANTLY, SHE HAS DISCOVERED A SPECIAL SECRET ABOUT THE ULTIMATE MEANING OF LIFE.**

**SHE’S DISCOVERED THAT WHEN WE ARE GENEROUS – EXTRAVAGANTLY GENEROUS – IT IS THEN THAT WE ARE MOST LIKE GOD.**

**IT IS THEN THAT WE ARE MOST ALIVE.**

**EVERY TIME WE GIVE BACK TO GOD, WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO COME ALIVE— THE CHANCE TO FEEL THE WAY WE WERE ALWAYS MEANT TO FEEL.**

**NOW, I SAID THIS PASSAGE ISN'T PRIMARILY ABOUT MONEY.**

**IT'S ABOUT SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT!**

**ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, I HAVE SUGGESTED THAT MARK'S GOSPEL IS CAREFULLY & INTENTIONALLY ARRANGED.**

**I THINK THIS PASSAGE IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE.**

**IMMEDIATELY AFTER THIS EVENT, JESUS TALKS YET AGAIN ABOUT HIS APPROACHING DEATH & THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS BEGIN TO SET IN MOTION THE PLOT THAT WILL EVENTUALLY BE THE CAUSE OF THAT DEATH.**

**JESUS NOTICED THIS WOMAN IN THE MIDST OF ALL THOSE WHO HAD GATHERED IN THE TEMPLE THAT DAY BECAUSE SHE REMINDED HIM OF SOMEONE.**

**SHE HAD NOTHING LEFT & IT WAS THE END FOR HER.**

**IT WAS THE END FOR HIM AS WELL.**

**SHE GAVE ALL THAT SHE HAD.**

**HE DID THE SAME.**

**SHE WITHHELD NOTHING FROM GOD.**

**NEITHER DID HE.**

**WHEN JESUS SEES THIS WOMAN, IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE'S LOOKING IN A MIRROR.**

**HE'S LOOKING AT HIMSELF.**

**HE CALLS THE DISCIPLES TO HIS SIDE & SAYS, *"HERE. LOOK AT HER. THIS IS WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING TO YOU ABOUT FOR THREE YEARS! THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO GIVE. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO TRUST. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE IN EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY."***

**LAST SUMMER, WE TALKED ABOUT DAG HAMMARSKJOLD'S SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY MARKINGS.**

**WE TALKED ABOUT ONE OF HIS ENTRIES THAT I THINK FITS WELL WITH THIS WIDOW.**

**HAMMARSKJOLD WRITES:**

***"TO BE FREE, TO BE ABLE TO STAND UP & LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND WITHOUT LOOKING BACK – TO SAY YES."***



**I THINK THAT'S WHAT JESUS IS TALKING ABOUT  
HERE WHEN HE POINTS OUT THE COMMITMENT OF  
THIS POOR WIDOW.**

**IT'S MORE ABOUT TRUST THAN IT IS ABOUT  
MONEY.**

**IT'S ABOUT A WILLINGNESS TO LEAVE  
EVERYTHING BEHIND & SAY "YES" TO GOD – TRUSTING  
THAT WHEN WE GIVE GENEROUSLY OF OUR TIME, OUR  
LOVE, OUR COMPASSION – IT IS THEN THAT WE TRULY  
COME ALIVE.**

**IT IS THEN THAT WE DISCOVER OUR TRUE PURPOSE  
IN LIFE. AMEN.**

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