

Focus reading: Mark 12:38–44 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=406356862>)

Other lectionary readings: Ruth 3:1–5; 4:13–17; Psalm 127; Hebrews 9:24–28

Theme: The Way of Giving and Receiving

Things are not always as they appear. Take, for example, the gifts that are described in this week's passage. Well-respected, well-dressed people offer large sums of money to the treasury in the synagogue. A poor widow offers two small coins to the same treasury. Which gift is the greatest? According to Jesus, it is the smaller gift offered by the widow that is indeed the greatest. The wealthy give large offerings "out of their abundance" (verse 44). To the contrary, the destitute widow, a beggar according to the Greek word used here, gives the only two coins she has. Surely, she could have kept one! Hers was a small offering, indeed. It would take four to eight of these coins to equal one penny! But it was, according to a literal Greek translation, "her whole life" (verse 44). The contrast between the scribes and the widow is clear, but what is not as clear is whether Jesus was holding the widow up as an example of giving, or if he is telling the story as an indictment against the tragic injustice of a destitute woman giving the little she had to the very ones who should have been providing for her care, the very ones who were saying their prayers even as they were taking homes away from such widows. At every turn, the most vulnerable members of society are exploited, even in a place that should be devoted to the faithful worship of the God of justice, mercy, and peace!

WHAT CAN I GIVE?

Since children generally are not concerned with money, not do they have access to it, it is important to help them find other ways for them to give of themselves. Talk with your child about what he or she has to give. No gift is small. The widow only had two little coins.

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE POOR

Jesus notices the poor widow when others were probably busy giving their own gifts in the temple. Jesus teaches his disciples to pay attention to the poor. Who are the poor in our midst? How can we pay attention? Thanksgiving is coming up. What can your family do to show that you *do* see the poor?

PRAYER

Loving God,
You give us so much,
but we are slow to share, often giving only our left-overs.
May our eyes be open to the needs of others
and our hearts and hands be open to
giving in ways that make a difference
in our lives and the lives of others.
Amen.