

Mark 12:41-44 The Widow's Offering

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums.

And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance,

but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

Picture a boxer, beaten-up and exhausted, many rounds into a grueling match. The bell rings, and he collapses onto a stool in the corner. With each round, his chances of winning have slipped slowly away. His opponent is just too strong, too fast.

Silently, the boxer's trainer hands him a wet towel for his forehead and tends to his wounds. Then, he stops and looks into his eyes. A silent agreement passes between them. The trainer picks up another towel and throws it into the ring.

Enough is enough. NO MAS!

Picture a small child, riding in a supermarket cart being pushed by his mother. He's been throwing a tantrum for the past 10 minutes. The other shoppers are looking at them with annoyance, but his mother goes on with her shopping as

though nothing has happened. She knows how to handle the situation. She's seen it before. Her son — who's cried himself out by now — realizes he's not getting anywhere with this tactic. So, he stops, ending his fearsome crying with a pathetic whimper.

Enough is enough.

Picture a man who's been struggling for many months with a disturbing thought. He's always enjoyed having a drink with dinner, but lately it seems that one drink has turned into two, or three or so many he's lost count. His marriage is on the rocks, his children give him disapproving glances and his boss is threatening to fire him because he's habitually late. He's troubled by the thought that maybe he's an alcoholic. A friend of his who's in recovery himself has said as much. He's told him about Alcoholics Anonymous and how it literally saved his life. He's given him his card and said, "Call me any time." The man fishes the card out of his top dresser drawer.

Enough is enough.

Picture a husband and wife who have reached an impasse in their marriage. For years now, they've traced and retraced the same pathways, resurrected the same tired, old arguments. There seems to be no solution, no way out of the logical and emotional tangle into which they've collapsed. Over the years, one or the other of them has suggested they go to their minister for help, or maybe a therapist — but each time, one of them has been unwilling. Now, they look at each other, and both of them realize it's the only solution. They'll go to seek help, at last.

Enough is enough.

In countless circumstances, saying “**Enough is enough**” is a good thing. It’s a recognition that it’s time to cease our pointless striving. It’s a decision to move on.

Why is it that, in each of these instances, somebody’s finally able to say, “**Enough is enough**” — but that when it comes to the accumulation of material wealth, most of us still believe the sky’s the limit?

“**You can never be too rich or too thin,**” said Wallis Warfield Simpson, who married King Edward VIII of England (a decision that led to his decision to abdicate the throne). Most people — thinking of the deadly disease of anorexia — would disagree with the Duchess of Windsor on the too-thin part. But too rich? No way. To quote a character in one of Jesus’ parables,

“You can always build a bigger barn, right?”

The story of the Widow’s Mite in Mark 12 is an example of someone declaring “**enough is enough**” financially. Immediately before this happened Jesus said,

Mark 12:38-40

“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts,

who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

Do you know what the Old Testament said about caring for widows?

Deuteronomy 10:18

He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.

Psalm 146:9

The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless,

Jeremiah 49:11

*Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive;
and let your widows trust in me.”*

Deuteronomy 24:17

*You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless,
or take a widow’s garment in pledge.*

Exodus 22:22

You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.

Jeremiah 22:3

Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed.

And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you,

and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

Deuteronomy 24:19

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it.

It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Get the picture? Do you think that the scribes and Pharisees, those who devoured widow's houses, knew what the Law told them regarding widows? Of course, they did! They knew that the fatherless and the widows were their **responsibility** not their **prey!**

And, in fact, this didn't change in the New Testament.

James 1:27

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this:

to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

You see, the disciples of Jesus were often impressed by the temple and the trappings of religion and the righteousness of the wealthy.

And so, there in the Court of Women stood 13 trumpet shaped repositories.

Wealthy men made a show of dropping some superfluous gold coins into these collection boxes, thereby fulfilling their religious duty. Jesus took this as an opportunity to teach his disciples a lesson.

Mark 12:42-44

And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.

For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

What lesson is Jesus teaching here? I think it's twofold:

1. This poor woman has given far more than those rich men. They gave some of their extra while she gave all.
2. This is the nature of sacrifice that you will see with your own eyes in just a few days.

On this day, he's teaching in the temple in relative peace, surrounded by his disciples. Just a few days later comes the agony in the garden when Jesus implores,

“Abba, Father, for you all things are possible;

remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.”

A short time after, he will be on the cross-

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?'
which means,

'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ... Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

Can you hear the sound of Jesus' offering falling into the collection-box?

During a stewardship campaign at a local church in a Midwestern town, a volunteer noticed that one of their prominent members hadn't made a contribution in years. This person was quite wealthy, so the volunteer thought, "Why not call him up?"

She calls the businessman. "Mr. Tightwad sir, according to our records you haven't made a contribution to the church and I'm wondering if you would like to do so now?"

Mr. Tightwad responds, "A contribution? Are you kidding? Do your records show that I have an invalid mother who requires expensive surgery once a year just to stay alive?"

The volunteer is a bit embarrassed and confesses, "Well, no sir, I was not aware." "Do your records show that my sister's husband was killed in a car accident? She has three kids and no means of support!"

Miss Volunteer is now completely at a loss. "I'm terribly sorry—"

"Do your records show that my brother broke his neck on the job and now requires a full-time nurse to have any kind of normal life?"

Completely humiliated, Miss Volunteer is ready to hang up. She says, “I am soooo sorry sir! I had no idea. Please forgive—”

But Mr. Tightwad is not through. “The gall of you people! I don’t give them a dime, so why should I give anything to you?!”

But seriously, back to the widow’s mite...

Why on earth would Jesus praise a woman for endangering her already endangered life to support an institution he constantly criticizes?

He doesn’t!

Jesus never commends the widow, applauds her self-sacrifice or invites us to follow in her footsteps. He simply notices her, and tells his disciples to notice her, too.

He is pointing to her and telling his disciples, “if you want to be impressed by someone don’t look at those rich men dumping gold into the collection. Instead look at that ordinary woman, that widow who gives all she has.

- That is what it means to trust in God.
- That is what faith looks like.

She believes that God will care for her just as he promised.

And how does God do that? Through his people reaching out in love to those in need.

Immediately after the widow leaves the temple, Jesus leaves, too, and as he does, an awed disciple invites Jesus to admire the temple’s mammoth stones and

impressive buildings. Jesus' response is quick and cutting: **"Not one of these stones will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."**

Enough is Enough!

Matthew 10:24–25

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.

John 14:8

Philip said to him,

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me,

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Let us pray:

Great Lord, you are the giver

of every good and perfect gift.

From the morning sun to the evening star,

our days are measured by your indescribable generosity.

We confess that we find it hard, at times, to be thankful.

So easily we allow ourselves to be distracted: by greed, by pride, by desire.

Teach us that contentment is not the result of what we have,

but is, rather, the result of what we believe:

that we are your people,

and the sheep of your pasture. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.