

Advent Devotional December 6, 2024

Weekly theme: Hope

Scripture

Luke 20:41-21:4

41 Then he said to them, "How can they say that the Messiah is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, 43 until I make your enemies your footstool.'" 44 David thus calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?"

45 In the hearing of all the people he said to the disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. 47 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

1 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; 2 he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; 4 for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Scott Dennis '13

We like familiarity, because it's comfortable. Within the church, we like to be familiar with our liturgy and our worship, our holidays and our calendars, and, naturally, we like our Bible stories to be familiar too. There's a comfortableness with the familiar. Yet, we have short stories from Scripture, like The Widow's Offering, which, although familiar, are certainly not comfortable. Our familiar, annual Advent-tide journey is here again, complete with its blue liturgical color, wreath, and decorations which direct us to look forward in hope and in our comfortable anticipation that Christmas is coming! Yet what is familiar and comfortable can be taken away from us and gone in an instant. Remember that 83 years ago today, December 6, 1941, our country was comfortable with the familiarity that the far-off war would not touch us or disrupt the ordinary lives of everyday Americans. That all changed the next day.

The widow in our gospel story was probably familiar with her poverty, but that does not mean she was comfortable with it. She could have taken comfort in continuing as she was, knowing that her life would likely not improve. Out of her poverty, she gave her offering of two small coins, which even then, would not buy very much. If anything, she opened herself to even more misery and worsened her plight. So where is the hope in this story?

The widow, by willingly giving out of her poverty, gave more than those who gave out of their abundance. Her offering did more to change her familiarity and comfort than the larger offerings. During this Advent season of hope, let us take time to give beyond what's comfortable and familiar. Researchers have found that being generous is good for our brains, makes us happier, helps us live longer, and counters depression. With verse four as our Advent challenge for today, may we all give charitably out of the great abundance with which God has blessed us that we may be a blessing to others. Who knows what was the greater blessing: the widow's meager offering, or her generous spirit?

Prayer

Dearest Lord Jesus, aid us this Advent-tide. Fill us with the same generous spirit that inspired a poor widow to donate the last of her wealth for others. Take our spiritual poverty, that we may be transformed by the riches of Your grace, love, and charity which we show one another. This we ask for Your Name's sake. Amen.