

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 21:1-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 21. Today, we will read verses 1-4.

The parallel passage to this section is found in Gospel of Mark 12:41-44, so as we read, we should compare the two passages back and forth. First, we must remember that this immediately follows the end of chapter 20, where Jesus spoke concerning the scribes. He told the people to beware of the scribes, because in Luke 20:47, "who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation." Then at the beginning of chapter 21, a poor widow is mentioned. Perhaps this poor widow's possessions had been defrauded by these scribes.

Verse 1: "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury."

In Gospel of Mark 12:41, the location is specifically mentioned: "Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury." The place where Jesus was sitting was probably outside the temple. We know that immediately adjoining the temple proper were the Court of the Priests and the Court of Israel; Israelite women were not permitted to enter there, only Israelite men. Further outside was the Court of the Women, and in the colonnades of the women's court there were thirteen offering chests. These were specifically for people who came to worship God and desired to give offerings, so that they could cast their money into the treasury chests. Behind that was the treasury itself.

The Gospel of Mark especially records: "Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury." The design of these offering boxes was such that the opening was shaped like a trumpet. There were thirteen of them,

making it convenient for people to drop their coins into the trumpet-shaped opening. The offering would then roll through the trumpet-shaped channel and finally fall into a collection box. One can imagine that whenever someone put in money, you could hear the sound of the coins rolling down and finally dropping into the chest.

What is especially remarkable is that on this day, Jesus entered Jerusalem as a Prophet and spoke many words there. At the very end, He came before the treasury to observe how the people were giving. What Jesus cared about was not the amount people gave, but how they gave, and with what kind of heart they gave. Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. We can imagine that the rich usually gave large sums, so perhaps as they stood there dropping coins into the trumpet-shaped opening, there was a continuous clanging sound. Perhaps the people nearby, hearing these sounds, looked upon the rich with admiration and even respected them for their willingness to give.

Verse 2: “and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.”

The passage in Gospel of Mark adds a note: “which make a quadrans.” She put in two mites, probably the smallest denomination of Jewish copper coins, and together they equaled the smallest Roman coin, a quadrans. Before the word “widow,” the Bible specifically adds that she was poor. For a poor person, what she possessed was truly very little. The two mites she had may very well have been the money she needed to buy food. Since she had two coins, she could have kept one for herself and offered the other, but instead she put in both coins.

After she gave her offering, we can imagine that as the two small coins dropped into the trumpet-shaped box, there were only two little clinks. Compared with the offerings of the rich before her, it seemed insignificant. Perhaps after giving, she herself felt ashamed and quietly hurried away. This is how we would normally view it according to human reasoning. Yet Jesus stood beside the treasury, specifically watching how people gave.

Verse 3: “So He said, ‘Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;’”

Jesus’ declaration is truly astonishing. These two small coins, in terms of the needs of the temple, were insignificant. Yet Jesus evaluated them by saying that these two mites were more than all the others had given. Jesus meant that all the money the rich had put in together was still outweighed by the widow’s two small coins. This is exactly the opposite of how we normally think.

Many times, we feel that what we can offer is too little and are embarrassed to present it, so we simply choose not to give. But Jesus does not see it that way. Instead, He says that these two small coins are greater than all the other offerings.

Verse 4: “for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.”

Jesus’ observation led Him to this conclusion: the others gave out of their abundance, out of what remained after all their own needs were met. Especially for the rich, they probably still had much left over, and from that surplus they took a small portion to offer. But this widow gave out of her livelihood. In other words, these two small coins were what sustained her life, yet from these two coins she put in everything she had.

When Jesus looks at our offering, He does not look at the amount given, but at the heart with which we give. For this widow, her love for the Lord was more important than her own living. She very likely did not know where her next meal would come from, yet she was willing to offer all that she had to the Lord. Therefore, Jesus especially commended this widow, because she “put in all the livelihood that she had.”

In contrast, the rich still had much remaining besides what they needed for life, and they only took out a portion from their surplus. Although the amount was much

larger than the widow's two mites, what God looks at is the heart. Their giving came from their excess, not from placing the Lord in the highest position in their lives.

When we place the Lord first in our lives, the Lord treasures such an offering. But if we place the Lord only in the leftover spaces of our lives, then from that standpoint, our offering is not nearly as precious to Him. The Lord does not look at quantity, but at quality. By "quality," I mean the place you truly give the Lord in your life.

Every one of us who has been saved by grace has received our life from the Lord. We were redeemed and bought back by Him. Therefore, everything we have rightfully belongs to Him already. So when we give, are we giving out of such a thankful heart?

This principle applies to money, but also to time and energy. Many times, when arranging our daily schedule, we seem always to place the Lord's time last: after everything else is finished, if there is any time remaining, then we read the Bible, pray, and draw near to the Lord.

When arranging the order of our lives, do we first arrange the Lord's matters and the church's matters, and only afterward arrange our work, entertainment, and vacations? When you first wake up in the morning, at the time when your energy is strongest and your mind is clearest, do you come to read God's Word and offer the best portion to Him? Or do you wait until the end of a busy day, when you are completely exhausted, and only then remember that you have not yet read the Bible, forcing yourself reluctantly to finish it? Of course, the Lord still accepts such an offering, but it does not compare to the widow's two copper coins. May God help us learn to place the Lord first in our lives.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us learn from this widow, willingly offering to You the best part of our lives first. Whether in our finances, in our time, or in our personal affairs, we are willing to place You first, allowing You to receive the best portion of our lives. Bless my life today, that in all things You may have the preeminence. Thank You, we pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.