

What Matters Most

Mark 12:41-44 *And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums.*

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

43 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.

44 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."

Today I'd like to speak to you on the issue of significance.

There is an incident towards the end of Jesus natural life that paints a picture of what significance is, and what it isn't.

You know, so often we are belittled by others.

We are often made to feel small by people who think that they are somehow better than we are, or stronger than we are, or smarter than we are, or something like that.

The author and speaker Tony Campolo one time told a story about his wife Peggy, a stay-at-home mom and housewife.

Mr. Campolo used to be on the faculty for the University of Pennsylvania, and there were frequent gatherings when the university faculty members would bring their spouses and socialize.

Inevitably, Peggy would be asked by a faculty member or another spouse, “And what is it that do you, dear?”

Peggy would reply, “I am socializing two homo sapiens in the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition in order that they might be instruments for the transformation of the social order into the theologically prescribed utopia inherent in the eschaton.”

In other words, she was raising 2 kids with Christian values to make a difference for God in the world.

Then, she would ask, “And what do you do?”

Whatever the other person said would just sound small compared to the dignity Peggy Campolo gave to her role as mother and wife.

So what is significance?

What matters?

What is important?

Am I important?

Does what I do matter?

Let's look at those questions today from our Bible passage.

Today's short story simply retells Jesus describing a small event in the last week of His life.

What's interesting is that Mark takes the time to record it.

Matthew doesn't, and neither does John.

John, who spent the most time recording Jesus' words, didn't write these ones down.

And Mark, the shortest of the Gospels, usually jam-packed with miracles and healings and stories, records this teaching of Jesus.

Mark considered it important enough to put into his short book.

So, between Jesus' last teachings including this, and Mark including this, I really believe there's something there for us.

Three simple thoughts about significance are found in this story.

#1 – Significance may have a small audience – v41.

Jesus alone was watching.

Then, He called the disciples to look, too.

Only Jesus in all the world saw what the widow did.

You see, in the Temple, there were 13 trumpet-shaped boxes designated for different offerings: for destitute children, for the poor, for the Temple, and so on.

Wealthy religious people wanted attention when they gave offerings.

They wanted people to know what they were doing.

But no one ever noticed the poor doing it.

There was no fanfare.

There were no trumpets blaring.

It went unnoticed.

Yet, Jesus saw, and He called His disciples to look and learn from it, too.

You have to know that Jesus sees what you do.

I don't say that as a scare tactic, though it can be used as such.

No, I say it to let you know that even if nobody else notices the good that you do, Jesus does.

Even if nobody else cares about the small things you do because they are the right things to do, Jesus does.

Jesus sees you in all you do.

He's watching, even if no one else ever will.

So take heart.

1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

What you do is not in vain.

It is not pointless.

It is not meaningless.

It matters to God, even if nobody else will ever set eyes upon it.

Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

You will reap what you sow – that is, what you plant, you will grow.

If you do things to please God, that’s what you will do – please God.

Sometimes it’s hard to do the right thing.

It has its costs.

But the costs of **not** pleasing God are a lot higher than the costs of pleasing God.

So it's worth it to live to do the right thing, no matter how hard, no matter how unnoticed.

Your life may have a small audience, but in the end it's the only audience that matters.

#2 - Significance is not always found in abundance – v42.

Let's get down to the nitty gritty – how much?

How much did the woman give?

Well, let me give you some biblical units of currency.

She gave a mite, which was worth 2 lepta, which was worth a kodrantes.

Her mite was 1/16 of a soldier's pay.

That's not a huge amount for a soldier to spare for an offering.

However, she was not a soldier, a government employee.

Maybe she was a housekeeper, and her salary was a lot smaller than a soldier's.

So her mite was probably a major portion of what she earned in the run of a day.

In fact, Jesus said in v44 that she had put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

This, folks, was sacrifice.

She gave till it hurt.

Some give what they will not miss.

Some give what doesn't hurt them to go without.

Someone once said that when it comes to giving, some people will stop at nothing.

The widow was different.

She gave with real sacrifice.

And Jesus commended her for it.

You see, the economics of God's grace, how grace works, what God considers important, is this: one lady putting in a penny is worth more than a rich man putting in 1000 times as much.

In God's scheme of reality, a penny given by one person is more valuable than \$100 given by another.

Because significance is not found in the amount of money put in but in the amount of heart putting it in.

Jesus said that attitude is far more important than amount.

A person can put in a little, or a person can put in a lot, but what God cares about most is the mindset of the person.

Which is a wonderful relief to those who can't afford a lot.

Each and every person can be generous, even if their amount is less than someone else's.

Whatever you do, whoever you are, whatever you have, little is much if God is in it.

Why, because God doesn't keep track of the same things we do.

#3 - Significance is often hidden by silence – v43-44.

Notice whom Jesus told about how great the woman was doing – His disciples.

Notice whom He didn't tell – the woman herself.

Canadian author Sigmund Brouwer comments on this in his excellent book *The Carpenter's Cloth*.

He says, "We can only imagine how much his words might have helped her, a woman who faced the continual struggle of frugal, lonely days until death claimed her fragile body.

"Even as she passed within distance of his voice, Jesus said nothing to relieve her of this desolation.

In his wisdom he knew what is easily forgotten by those who give for reasons other than simple faith: Faith marked by self-surrender – for her act was surely that – makes any burden light.

With her focus on God instead of her own concerns, this pauper widow had no need for an immediate reward."

You see, God may never let you know in this life the lives that you have touched with your faith and through your deeds.

He may give you a small glimpse, but you will likely never know the full impact of your life.

Matthew 10: 42 says, "If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Even a small forgotten deed on earth will be proclaimed loudly in heaven.

We don't know what the world would be like without us, but God certainly knows.

God knows the what-might-have-been's.

Our significance cannot be seen with our physical eyes, but only with the eyes of faith.

We have to believe that God rewards what is done even in private.

Our significance is found in the fact that we are alive, and made in His image to do good works.

Let me close with the words of Francis Schaeffer, a wonderful man of faith.

He had been speaking about the story of Moses, and how Moses' rod became the rod of God.

God took Moses' staff and used it for His own purposes.

Schaeffer says, "There are no little and big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people.

The problem for each of us is applying this truth to ourselves: Is Francis Schaeffer the Francis Schaeffer of God?"

Or more importantly, is Carl Dennis the Carl Dennis of God?

Is this church the church of God?

This is where we find significance.

This is what brings worth to our acts of service, our worship, our own widow's mite, given to God.

Am I doing it for Him?

Am I consecrated?

Is this thing I do consecrated?

That's what brings value and significance.

What Matters Most

#1 – Significance may have a small audience – v41.

#2 - Significance is not always found in abundance – v42.

#3 - Significance is often hidden by silence – v43-44.