



The Widow & The Samurai

Mark 12:41-44 NLT

⁴¹ Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. ⁴² Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. ⁴³ Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. ⁴⁴ For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on."

Luke 21:1-4 NLT

¹ While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. ² Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. ³ "I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. ⁴ For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, **poor as she is**, has given everything she has."

Coin = Lepta (aluminum, copper or bronze coin of ancient Greece) Value = 1/100th Drachma

Two Lepta = One Quadran (A fourth part of an "As" [a 12 oz copper coin of Ancient Rome]);

Two Lepta = One Farthing (1/4 of a Penny)

Farthing = (Definition) Something of very small value, insignificant

PERSPECTIVE: Jewish Temple in Jesus' time had a collection box, allowing worshippers to give offerings during their visits to the Temple. While some people viewed this as a part of worship, many people, especially those who were rich and in positions of power or authority, sought to make a public display of their wealth as they gave. They cared little for God, and more about their position, authority, and prestige...and wanted all who were in the Temple to notice how important (and wealthy, and generous) they were.

Jesus sits and watches the parade of pride and arrogance as many come giving a token of their wealth to the Temple, making a dramatic presentation as they drop each coin into the collection box. In the midst of this, a widow slips through the crowd and drops two small coins into the collection box. No fanfare, no drama, just a simple act of giving.

The value of her gift is ¼ of one penny (as of 1600 AD). In today's dollars, it would be equal to roughly 43/1000 of a penny. To the onlookers, a miniscule, insignificant gift of little value.

But to Jesus, her gift meant much more. He singled her out for one reason:

NOT the dollar value of her gift



The Widow & The Samurai

NOT that she gave her gift with no fanfare

BUT that her gift was the most extravagant of them all...

Why?

BECAUSE SHE HELD NOTHING BACK...SHE GAVE ALL THAT SHE HAD!

PERSPECTIVE: Widows in Jesus' day had no value. If there were no family members to care for them, they were left to fend for themselves as beggars in the street. What little they earned was all they had to buy food, clothing, and to provide shelter from the elements.

But she chose to give EVERYTHING she had to God. Why?

Perhaps she was sitting in the crowd when Jesus delivered his Sermon on the Mount, and she heard Him say,

³⁸ "Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." Luke 6:38 NLT

So maybe her giving was motivated by her desire to break the cycle of poverty in her life by giving to God and expecting Him to give back to her financially.

But she also heard Him say,

²⁵ ...I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? ²⁸ "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? ³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need." Matthew 6:25-33 NLT

This widow understood the importance of COMMITMENT. She was, in a sense, giving her life completely to God because she gave all she had. This made her 100% reliant on God to clothe her, feed her, and provide her with shelter.



The Widow & The Samurai

If God didn't come through for her, she was going to die.

Now THAT IS FAITH, TRUST, AND COMMITMENT!

In Feudal Japan, the Samurai (servant warriors) were the elite fighting force of their day. They dedicated their entire lives to serve their Lord and Master. The way of the Samurai was the pursuit of perfection in both skill and usefulness in service. The Samurai put the wishes and desires of their Master above their own, and even (if necessary) their own lives. In return for their loyalty and commitment, the Master clothed them, fed them, and provided shelter for themselves and their families.

Their very name brought fear into the minds of their enemies. From their youth, these "mighty men" were trained in the art of service to their master and skilled in warfare, and by the time they were in their teens, they were experts with the sword, spear, bow and arrow, staff, knife, kama, sai, and their hands and feet.

The Samurai were also talented craftsmen. Many trained in the art of calligraphy, carpentry, iron and steel forging and fabrication, music, painting, writing and more. In life, as in battle, they were focused on pleasing their Lord and Master with everything they put their hands to do. They understood they represented their Kingdom wherever they traveled, and sought to do so with honor and integrity, out of respect and love for their Lord and Master. Their entire life was devoted to pleasing and honoring their Master, both by word and by deed.

They could battle on foot or on horseback. They trained as a unit, and each soldier knew he could count on his fellow soldiers to stand with him in battle, even to the point of death. They studied the art of war, and learned what strategies worked and which ones did not. They also learned the tactics used by their enemies and developed countermeasures to assure the enemy's defeat.

They learned a soldier alone is an easy target. Because they trusted each other, they could be 100% committed to any battle, as they knew their fellow Samurai would not let them down.

This gave them a strategic advantage in battle, as they had no fear. They knew their training was the best that could be provided. They knew their fellow Samurai would remain at their side no matter what, and they were all committed to serving their Master to the point of death, so they fought with no fear. Individually, they were incredible fighters. As a fighting unit, they were virtually unstoppable, as they fought as a cohesive unit...they fought as ONE MAN committed serving their Lord and to further His kingdom at all costs.

These men lived together, ate together, trained together, served their Master and fought together to protect the kingdom of their Lord from suffering defeat. They were committed to the welfare and well-being of their Master, and to each other, as well as their extended families. If one of the Samurai did not return from battle, the Lord Master and the families



The Widow & The Samurai

of the remaining soldiers provided for the extended family of the fallen soldier, often providing one of their own sons as a husband for the widow and a father for her children.

APPLICATION

Jesus is watching us today, to see what we are doing with what He has given us. What part of our gifts, talents, and resources are we giving back to Him? How much time out of the week is "Jesus" time and how much out of our week is "Me" time?

"It's all about me" was the mantra of the Pharisees of Jesus day. In many churches today, it's the same...both among adults and youth. We make a BIG DEAL about the little we do for Jesus so others can see what we are doing...but Jesus is still looking for a few "widows" who are willing to GIVE THEIR ALL for the sake of the Kingdom.

As Christians, we are called to be both servants and warriors of Christ. We are, in effect, called to be Christian Samurai. Today, our Master's kingdom is still at war with an enemy who is committed to its destruction. We've been given an instruction manual to successfully wage war and conquer the enemies of Christ in the earth, but are we training to use it effectively?

If Christ is our Lord and Master, then all we say and all that we do should be weighed by this question: "***Does this bring honor to my Master?***"

God is looking for black belt warriors who are willing to give their ALL for the Kingdom. But becoming a BLACK BELT for the kingdom requires a serious commitment...

GIVING 100% OF OURSELVES TO THE SERVICE OF OUR LORD

This month has been a discussion on giving. We can give our time, our talents, our money, or our stuff to God...and all of these things are good.

But the one thing that God wants most of all is for you to give **YOURSELF** in service to Him, and to those He directs you to serve.

And when you do that, you, like the widow, have given all that you have!

The widow, who was poor, gave all that she had. Can we afford to do anything less?