

Wesley United Methodist Church

November 8, 2015

“Put Your Two Cents In.”

Mark 12:38-44

One Sunday morning in a little church, the sermon just seemed to go on and on. Unlike me, the preacher kept circling the point but never quite getting there. One of the little boys in the service that day was getting more and more restless. Mom was having a hard time getting him to sit still. Finally, in a whisper loud enough for the whole congregation to hear, he said: "Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?"

That story is a good reminder that preachers need to follow the old KISS principle. You know: Keep It Simple St... It also reminds me of how everyone, even the little ones, like to put their two cents worth in.

And this morning, we find out the origins of that phrase, “Putting your two cents worth in.” It comes from our reading from Mark. Let’s look at Mark 12:38-44.

According to diagrams and according to Biblical Commentaries, within the Temple proper, was the area known as the Women’s Court. There, along the walls, were thirteen large, metal, trumpet-shaped receptacles to receive offerings for various purposes. It was across from this area where Jesus sat to teach. Now you have to remember that the atmosphere of the Temple was sort of like Round-Up Sunday, Sunday School, Worship, Fellowship and Revival all rolled into one, all the time. Jesus says that into that commotion of noise, motion, and excitement, people would come and make their offerings. Some of the rich people did it with great fanfare. Those receptacles sat in plain view and the clinking of their offering advertised to the crowds around the size of their offerings. The loud noise would cause people to turn and look.

Sometimes these rich people would go from one metal receptacle to another, loudly proclaiming just how generous they were, not with words but with the clinking and clanking in the receptacles. Jesus, sitting there teaching amidst all the noise of the Temple, heard when the widow quietly placed her two mites (cents) in the offering receptacle. He heard and he pointed out her generosity. It was just a little thing but because she gave reverently, rejoicing, and recklessly, this widow’s attitude in giving has become the paradigm for all giving.

It’s the widow who gave all she had and she gave it reverently. But before we talk about her, let me demonstrate how you can be one of those people Jesus was talking about. You’ve probably seen those people before. The ones who want everyone to know how much they give.

What you do is this. First you have to prepare your wallet or purse. You go to the bank and get a brand new \$20 bill or even a \$50 bill, it just depends on how much you want to be noticed. You also get at least twenty \$1 bills. You can use as many as thirty but that may be too much.

Second, you lay the \$20 on the outside of all those ones and carefully place the whole bundle in your wallet or purse. Then, you sit in the pew as the offering plate comes and pretend not to notice that it has started down the row. When it gets to you, you act surprised. Make a big deal about getting out your wallet or opening your purse while your neighbor holds the offering plate.

Finally, you carefully pull out the \$20 and the ones, fold the \$20 over so it looks like a whole stack of \$20 and carefully place it in the plate (so your neighbor can see how generous you are), take the plate and pass it on. That’s if you really want to be like those people Jesus was talking about.

Let me tell you also that the widow gave reverently. I saw it one Sunday in the form of a five year old little girl who ran up and drew her arms around my leg and hugged the stuffing out of me. She came out of nowhere in the busy crowd in the entry way of the church I was serving at the time. She nearly tripped me. When those little arms unwrapped themselves from my leg she exclaimed, “Pastor Emilie, look what I’ve got for Jesus this morning.” I looked down and she proudly showed me her quarter for the Children’s offering.

Her Mom and Dad had already started her on an allowance. They gave her 10 quarters a week. One of them, the first one was for Jesus. The second one was for savings. And the other eight she could spend almost any way she wanted. I wish you could have seen the look on that little girl’s face when she gave her quarter to Jesus.

It was just a little thing, but the widow’s mite couldn’t have been any more precious than that quarter at that moment. This was a simple act of love, faith and unselfish giving. Like the widow, this little girl gave reverently.

The widow also gave rejoicingly. My spellchecker doesn’t think that’s a real word, but I’m going to use it anyway because we’re called to give rejoicingly as well.

A missionary from India told about an army officer who stopped to have his shoes shined by a poor Indian boy on the street. He said the boy launched into his task with such enthusiasm and vigor that the man was utterly amazed. Instead of an ordinary performance with an all-too-eager outstretched hand for a tip, the boy worked diligently until the leather sparkled with a beautiful shine. The officer asked, "Why are you taking so much time to polish my boots?" The young boy told the officer, "Well, Sir, last week Jesus came into my heart and now I belong to him. Since then, every time I shine somebody's shoes, I keep thinking they're shoes that belong to Jesus, so I do the very best I can. I want Jesus to be pleased." It was just a little thing, doing a great job instead of a good job. But it made all the difference. That young boy felt the joy of Christ in his heart and like the widow was living a life of rejoicing.

At the beginning of this sermon, I said that the widow also gave recklessly. She gave without thought to her own needs first. She gave her all out of love for God, knowing that, even though she was a poor widow, God would take care of her.

Ok, I don't want to be a real pain, I know we've talked a lot about giving this year and you probably are getting tired of it. But the simple truth is this; we're called to give like the widow. Not just a mite, but our all.

And so it is with the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces. They, too, serve reverently, rejoicingly and recklessly. They serve reverently because they believe in the cause to keep this country free. They serve rejoicingly because they follow their heart. They give their lives recklessly, knowing fully that it may be taken by enemy fire. May God bless them and protect them as they faithfully serve our country.

The restless little boy at the beginning of the sermon asked: "Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?" Just remember this: What we give may only be a little thing. But if we give God our all, there's no telling where we'll go. To think about it, it won't really matter because God will be leading us.