

The Poor Widow's Offering

You will hear pastors giving a sermon and people reading this story often praising this widow for her incredible faith though she had extraordinarily little to give. I know I used to believe that this was the point of this story as well! However, is that what Yahusha was showing us? Does Yahusha want poor widows to give away every half penny they possess?

The main point of the story of the widow's mite is not what most people have assumed. Have you ever noticed Yahusha does not praise the widow for her offering? He does not even encourage us to duplicate her behavior. He simply states what she did as a fact and brings the comparison. He compares the widow's offering to the offering of all the others. Yahusha uses the widow to illustrate an entirely different point.

How many times have you heard this story explained with praise for the widow's sacrifice in giving all she had into the temple treasury? She is then held up as an example for giving, often used as an argument for tithing, not out of our abundance, but out of our poverty. This explanation makes the temple, leaders, and its institution equivalent with the church and the religious institution of today. Give til it hurts, we're often told, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Let's read this scripture in context together: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **7** Each one must give as he has **decided in his heart**, *not reluctantly* or **under compulsion**, for God loves a cheerful giver. **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

Do you believe that the widow gave reluctantly or under compulsion in her heart to give her last to half pennies to the temple as an offering? Let's look at the Scriptural context to see if this view holds up.

"21 Yausha looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box,² and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³ And he said, 'Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on. **Luke 21:1-4**

“41 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 there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two leptón, (a leptos-*leptón*, the smallest Hebrew coin used in New Testament time, a mite, λεπτόν, was the smallest Greek copper coin).

42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins , which made 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. (the Greek of the original text says that she put in her “whole life). ” **Mark 12:41-44**

The scene from both accounts presents Yahusha and His disciples sitting down opposite one of the temple treasury boxes, making observations of those who are putting in their offering. The highlight is the offering made by a poor widow, whom we are told gives two small copper coins. The observation made by Yahusha is as follows, *“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.”*

As mentioned earlier, traditionally this passage is held up as a model of sacrificial giving. saying She gave a willing sacrifice because she trusted in Alahym as the source of all she had. We are often taught that Yahusha commends the widow for giving out of her poverty vs. giving out of abundance as the rich do. But do we read that she gave willingly and in Amunah (faith) or not? Do we read where the Messiah commends her?

Usually this passage is then applied to either tithing or an attitude of sacrificial giving to the Messiah. But there’s a major problem here, and it assumes that Yahusha is pleased with the temple treasury, the religious leaders, and the entire false religious institution. Context, as they say, is king.

In the passage immediately prior to this one, in both **Mark** and **Luke**, Yahusha offers a strong warning to His disciples in condemnation of the scribes,

“38 And in his teaching he said, “**Beware of the scribes**, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 **who devour widows’ houses** and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive greater condemnation.”

This is followed by the account of the widow’s mite, which itself is immediately followed by this passage

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” 2 And Yahusha said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” **Mark 13:1-2**

Just to summarize, the passage under consideration, the Widow’s Mite, is sandwiched between a warning against the scribes and the prophecy of the temple’s destruction. How in the world does a passage so often described as an example of sacrificial giving fit here?

The answer is that the passage has nothing to do with sacrificial giving and everything to do with further judgment against the false religious system against which Yahusha has so often spoken. In fact, this observation of the poor widow deceived out of her last two coins serves as the final straw to announce the destruction of the center of this false religious system, namely Herod’s Temple.

In **Matthew 6**, we are told by Yahusha to avoid public displays of giving, sound no trumpet, and in fact, do not even let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. Instead, we are told to let our giving be done in secret.

However, the religious leaders had constructed 13 treasure-chests for giving around the colonnade in the Court of Women. These chests were also called “trumpets” because of their narrow mouth and wide base. The

sound of the coins dropping in was easily heard. So when Yahusha says do not sound a trumpet when giving, in **Matthew 6**, there is a bit of irony that the treasure chests were shaped like a trumpet and sounded when the money was deposited. It was into one of these trumpets that the widow gave her last coins.

Note: next the warning given against the scribes in the passage just prior, “*who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers.*” Here we are told that the scribes **devour** (2719 *katesthíō* (from 2596 /*katá*, "down," intensifying 2068 /*esthíō*, "eat") – properly, eat all the way down; (figuratively) *utterly* devour, leaving nothing; *ferociously* consume all the way down, i.e. with a rapacious, voracious appetite – leaving *only ruination, without hope of recovery, or even remains*) widow’s houses (a house, household, dwelling; goods, property, means).

Think about this. The very passage before the widow’s offering, we are given a warning about scribes that devour widow’s houses. It is not difficult to make the connection between the two mentions of widows; both being devoured by the religious leaders, exemplified by the widow giving all that she had to a corrupt religious system. If she gives sacrificially to a corrupt religious system, is that worthy of a commendation? What would we say today to the poor widow, duped by the televangelist into sending her last bit of money? That is the scene in this first century story and it simply cannot be missed.

The fact of the matter is that a pure and undefiled Assembly (Believers) are to care for widows and orphans (**James 1:27**). This wasn’t something new, the Mosaic law created provisions for just them. (**Exodus 22; Deut. 10**)

This poor widow shouldn’t be led to believe that she must contribute to the religious system that was failing to care for her needs. She should have been cared for, under Turah, but first century Judaism was an apostate form of Mosaic Turah (Law).

Are you familiar with the worth of a widow’s mite? A quick Google search can tell you one mite is worth less than a penny! This widow’s offering tells us she was extremely poor.

Just as Yahusha is “facing” the Temple in **Mark 13:3** as he begins to pass judgment on it, so too is he “facing” the Temple treasury in the story of the widow.

The widow gave all she had, and as quoted before, perhaps she did not eat for days afterwards. The Temple treasury was meant to protect and provide for the widows, given the numerous commands to such action in the Tanakh (Old Testament). But this ideal was not the case in reality – the Temple has become an institution that, rather than protect and provide for the widows, they exploited them. This poor widow gives everything she has is not a sign of her generosity but poverty, and Yahusha is not celebrating, he is lamenting.

Exodus 22:22-24 You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Psalms 68:5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is Yahuah in his Qadosh (holy) habitation.

1 Timothy 5:3-6 Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of Yahuah. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on Yahuah and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.

1 Timothy 5:16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the Assembly not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

Proverbs 15:25 Yahuah tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow's boundaries.

Psalms 146:9 Yahuah watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Zechariah 7:10 Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before Alahym, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Jeremiah 49:11 Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me.

Proverbs 28:27 Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses.

Giving is good when done as scripture outlines, our giving is intended to care for the needs of the widows, orphans and the needy within the Assembly, it is a principle of loving your neighbor as yourself. Yahuah established the tithe and giving to provide and care for his people Yasharal and it has become perverted and used for the gain of the religious organizations and it's leaders instead, "**Beware of the scribes**, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 **who devour widows' houses** and for a pretense (an attempt to make something that is not the case appear true). make long prayers. They will receive greater condemnation."