



Mark 12:38-44

38 In his teaching Jesus said, 'Beware of the scribes who like to walk about in long robes, to be greeted obsequiously in the market squares, **39** to take the front seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets; **40** these are the men who swallow the property of widows, while making a show of lengthy prayers. The more severe will be the sentence they receive.'

41 He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the treasury, and many of the rich put in a great deal. **42** A poor widow came and put in two small coins, the equivalent of a penny . **43** Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; **44** for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on.'

Other readings: 1 Kings 17:10-16 Psalm 145 (146) Hebrews 9:24-28

We are approaching the end of our reading of the gospel of Mark. Today's reading provides a contrast: the self-assured scribes parading their virtue, and the humble widow offering all she had to live on.

Jesus attacks the hypocrisy of those religious people who make an outward show of virtue, but whose hearts are full of greed. His words against such behavior are harsh: they will receive a severe sentence. Such texts as this are sometimes used as a pretext for a general denigration of all the teachers of Judaism. We must bear in mind that the gospels also tell us of good and virtuous scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus observes the generosity of the poor widow. Unlike the scribes he has previously criticized, she does not trumpet her virtue. Almost unnoticed, she gives all she can for the upkeep of the temple of God. Jesus then 'called the disciples and said to them'. In this way the evangelist underlines this teaching of Jesus.

Our first reading, from the first Book of Kings, portrays another widow, the widow of Sidon who is suffering from a punishing famine. Like the widow in the gospel, she shows remarkable generosity and trust in God. Though she does not have enough for herself and her son, she agrees to prepare something to eat for Elijah too, with remarkable consequences. Her example of faith is recalled by Jesus in chapter 4 of Luke's gospel.

Do I parade my good deeds before others in order to appear better than I am?

Am I prepared to take risks in being generous?

Let us pray for a spirit of thankfulness and generous sharing of what we have.

Let us pray that those who are immersed in selfishness will take up the call to share with the poor.