

Pentecost 25 2021
Mark 12-13

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 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. 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 [Jesus] came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” And Jesus 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.”

In the Name of Jesus.

There is no wonder that they laughed at Him when He was on the cross.

And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

If He is King of anything—to anyone who matters in this world: religious leaders, bullies, condemned murderers—then Jesus Christ is the King of Comedy!

Stripped, beaten half to death, nailed up in shame and humiliation, without a friend in the world—even those CRUCIFIED with Him found time along with whatever else they had going on that day to ‘revile’ Him—

And this poorest of all men boasts about those ten, twenty, fifty-ton blocks that made up the temple of the Jews: ‘Not one will be left here upon another.’ Surely! Such a knowing and powerful man can come down a few inches from a cross and start evening scores!

ANOTHER thing He must have meant about the temple falling, the meeting place of Real God and real sinners: God in Man and that Man now with you and me.

I’m going to go against everything you have ever heard about the widow and her little coins and then what follows, about her church being pulled down by her God. Lord, have mercy!

That woman was DESPERATE that that awesome building remain in this world! Fu-un-nny Jesus! He can’t even add! Her CERTAINLY is not what the sophisticated in our day, in our church body, call ‘a Churchman!’

‘Yes, our salvation is not settled by our offerings. Buuuuutttttt....let’s not lose our minds, Anderson, Jesus, Luther, Holy Spirit—you dummy! The church is a business too—I know, I know, market place den of thieve whipping the animals out and turning over the banking tables; but, that was more for dramatic effect, wasn’t it?—’

‘A pastor, a CEO of his local branch of Church, Inc., must know how to focus time and energy on the rich with their sums pouring in to the treasury: what KEEPS those stones, one upon another! And the UPKEEP! And...’

And your poor pastor dies a little more inside.

When Jesus saw how that poor widow was willing to starve herself—KILL herself!—in order to maintain that place where her God would meet her and here her and forgive her all her sins...

What separated that woman from all the church benefactors was that she must have been a terrific sinner—cannot wait to meet her!

And when Jesus saw her, her sin, her desperate state, her two last coins—He went out of the place and declared to His men: ‘Well, we gotta tear this place down, me and my Dad!’

My dear ones, even your poor pastor ‘gets around’ in the church. I’ve walked and talked with the ‘influential’ and blah, blah, blah. And God kept me breathing this day to declare to you that they are ALL liars and murderers and nobody worth listening to.

Moses declared that God would not stand to have all our idols displayed before Him. Jesus came and declared that God will not stand for you and me, UNLESS we lay out all our idols before Him: and yet come before Him, without fear.

And so, He suffered; and He died; and He rose without witness and left us only a the Gospel—WHICH, as they say: That Gospel, and a couple bucks, will buy you a cup of coffee.

I have been informed by concerned brothers and sisters in our little family that we have some budget or money troubles. I am sorry if these matters cause you, the children of God, any grief. And I must inform you that I can do NOTHING to alleviate the troubles. Following my Boss, I can ONLY assure you that this building will topple, this property will burn, and not one square inch of it will survive the disaster coming. It may not even survive another Presidential administration or two!

But what WILL survive is that poor widow—WITHOUT her temple, her security blanket. And that TEMPLE was perfectly fine! For the God of pardon and an open ear had blessed that ONE house of bargaining for Hope into a place where Hope was given away. But such a Gospel, such a weak promise, could not keep the rich from turning it into a place to show-off. Even God in Jesus' flesh could not get ONE 'WOW' out of the Twelve Apostles—AND HE CHOSE THEM!

But when those 12 saw big blocks all stacked up, the got as excited as any church official who has ever blackened this earth.

My dear ones: if you have the Gospel, your Baptism, and the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, you have God in mercy, God-for-you, whatever is going on with money and budgets and property and buildings and crowds and attractiveness and popularity and the votes of men, their feet, their wallets, their flapping lips.

And the Day is drawing near, when all men will be very afraid. For all their investments will be declared worthless; their religion, their offerings, their boasts. And then, where will any of us find refuge?

In the King—not of Comedy, but of those who are so desperate to have a gracious God in our midst, that we'd give anything to keep Him pardoning, rather than demanding from us.

I, your poor pastor, in place of your broke God and your King of poverty, Jesus, assure you of this:

Your church building is going to burn with every other piece of property that men value so highly. So, live, love, worship, die...and rise... in peace in the Name of Jesus.