



REFLECTIONS

October 20, 2013

They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on."

Mark 12:44

Icon Unaware

The crowd easily dismissed her presence if it was noticed at all. Her tattered clothing, undressed hair, weathered complexion, and shy demeanor offered her no standing in the assembly. She seemingly brought nothing to the proceedings at hand, but that notion could not have been further from the truth. She may have hoped her act would go unnoticed; but it was. Someone watched her every move. And that someone elevated her gift into an icon unaware.

Both Mark and Luke tell the story of the poor widow who gave but two small coins to the temple treasury. Together the coins were worth less than a penny Luke tells us. But to the observer standing in the wings, the monetary value of the gift didn't matter. It was the proportion of the gift that captured the attention of Jesus.

One can envision the poor widow, hugging to the shadow of the outer wall as she crept slowly toward the altar. She hoped to go unnoticed when she placed her two copper coins into the temple treasury. And if anyone did pay attention, they likely dismissed her gift as insignificant. In terms of the temple budget, they were right; it made no difference at all. But in terms of the portion of her wealth, her faith, and her sacrifice, the poor widow set a high standard. And Jesus was watching.

Many are those who pass through this world with great accumulations of wealth in its various forms. Most of them will find no record of their lives in the annals of time; but the poor widow did. In her poverty, she gave all she had to live on. And I suspect she would have been glad to give an equal amount of her time should anyone have asked for it. Her gift was not to satisfy an obligation, or to call attention to her sacrifice. It was a gift to God given from her heart. She believed the gift would go unnoticed.

But Jesus was watching.

Jesus quickly made note of the gift to those around him. It was not her wealth that left her mark. She had no influence to offer, and no one bothered to ask for her time. Yet in the quiet moment of it all, a poor widow with tattered clothing, undressed hair, weathered complexion, shy demeanor, and no standing at all set an example that will never be exceeded. Her act became an icon for giving. It was all she had to live on.

And Jesus was watching.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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