

“Put In Your 2 Cents”

The Rev. Drew Willard
November 11th, 2018
25th Sun./Pentecost
2nd Sun. of Stewardship
New Members received
1 Kgs 17:8-16, Mk 12:38-44

[Jesus said,]

“For they all contributed out of their abundance;
but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.”

Let us pray... O God,

Help us believe there will always be enough,

because you will help us, though we are to do our part, too.

Help us grow in confidence to voice our need and

put our two cents in.

Help us to keep going, trusting we will get the help we need

to live authentic lives of purpose.

Amen

“I’d like to put in *my* two cents...”

Haven’t we all said that – or thought that, at one time or another ?

It has come to mean having a chance to express your opinion,

but I wonder what the origin might have been for this phrase and

just *why* exactly it would *only* cost two cents.

Maybe it just means having the opportunity to have your say – your contribution,
for what it’s worth...

That would put it closer to the meaning of today’s Gospel lesson

about the widow with the two copper coins that don’t even make two cents.

Apart from the dollar amount – or shekels

or was it denarii ?

Well, in any event, Jesus was saying it was significantly more costly to this woman

than it was for those who contributed out of convenience or for the recognition.

What seems to be implied by Jesus, is that this woman out of her necessity,

also had a stake in what was going on at the Temple –

she had a claim for its blessings as a special place to approach God.

Essentially, Jesus was saying this woman had the right to put in her two cents –

she had a right to have a say in what was going on,

even to question what the Temple was doing...

This brings to mind other times when Jesus himself was challenged

by women speaking up and even getting him to change his mind,

like when the Syro-Phoenician woman got him to help Gentiles;

and how he stood up for women and their right to speak,

like the frightened woman who was healed

when she tried to secretly touch the hem of his clothes.

Willard, p.2

Not just women, but men, too – people in their desperation crying out for help,
‘Lord, have mercy on me !’ like Bartimaeus –
the son of Timaeus, the “Son of Honor”
who was a person of privilege brought low by his infirmity
and abandoned by the social system of the day.
Though the crowd tried to silence him, he cried out anyway –
and Jesus heard him...

Putting in your two cents can also mean, ‘Giving it all you’ve got’,
like for some cause in which you are invested, to strive for like a warrior.
Giving something everything you’ve got, even down to your last two cents,
is not a position any of us ever want to be in.
But when we are, we are reminded that what we value most
must not be taken for granted.
Think of those who go off to other lands as soldiers,
or to sea as sailors and marines,
or airmen & women who patrol the skies.
They may not be permitted publicly to put in their two cents
because as professional public servants, they must go where they are sent –
and are expected to give it all they’ve got on the day of trial.
So, we must remember them – and that sometimes we must be their voice.
We must be their voice, so that they may not be made out to be scapegoats
when they are called to make sacrifices.
That goes for police officers, too.

More and more people are finding their voice and having their say,
sometimes having to give it all they’ve got.
Church is one of those places where people can still come
to do this and make a difference.
Generally, I’m the one who gets up to stand before you, week to week
to speak from the pulpit – and hopefully, to get you thinking
and even inspired to try that ‘Commandment to Love’-thing
we should all be doing.
Rally Day last month showed you some ways we are already doing that,
and where our church needs help and how you can get involved.
Today, look at the Narthex and Fellowship Hall, filled with the creative generosity
of our congregation, and there about 20 church members here to help
yesterday with our Country Market.

Sometimes, it is enough to make a pledge of a monetary donation
and ‘put in your 2 cents’ that way – well... maybe not *just* 2 cents.

Willard, p.3

You've heard that joke about the pastor talking to the congregation about fundraising for the building renovation, saying,

“There good news and there's bad news:

The good news is that we have the money for the project.

The bad news is that it's still in your pockets!”

Think of it more like this:

We don't always know where our help comes from – but we know from whom.

God is not like 'Santa Claus' fulfilling our wish list,

but challenges us to align our wish list towards God's wish list

for us to have a fulfilled and authentic life,

and – in the process, trust that God has resourced this world well.

The list we *need* to give to God – through Christ,

are all those things that are most painful and terrifying to us –

especially loneliness and meaninglessness.

There is nothing that humans go through, that he has not confronted,

and that is how he is our Savior.

It is not simply because we were created 'sinful' from which we must be saved.

It is from what is most painful and what is most fearful in our lives,

that Christ saves us.

Jesus said to this effect,

“Don't be anxious about life – what you shall eat, what you shall drink,,
what you shall wear?

Isn't life more than concerns about food and clothing?

Do you see the birds of the sky?

They neither sow nor reap nor gather food into barns,

Yet your Heavenly Guardian feeds them.

Are you any less significant than little birds...”

After the Prophet Elijah had prophesied that there would be a drought,

God sent him to a camp by a stream where ravens brought food to him.

When the drought caused the stream to dry up,

God directed Elijah to what is now Lebanon and

find a certain widowed woman who would feed him.

She didn't know what was going – but God knew her heart and

Elijah knew what he had been told, so he asked this woman for help.

She was convinced that she would be cooking her last meal for her and her son.

Even so, she was the kind of person who had a willingness to trust and to try.

As it turns out, her container of grain and cooking oil did not run out –

and whether that was by a miracle or some other unknown source,

they had enough to survive the climate crisis.

Willard, p.4

We have to believe that there will always be enough,
because God will help us, but we have to do our part, too.

We have to ask for that help; We have to voice our need;

We have to put our two cents in – like Elijah asking for a cup of water.

We have to be ready to receive that help and we have to keep going, and
keep trusting that we will get the help we need –

we will be saved to live authentic lives of purpose.

Amen

Our lesson today from 1 Kings 17:8-16 is a miracle story about the Prophet Elijah that describes how abundance can arise in the midst of apparent scarcity through God's generosity...

⁸ The LORD told Elijah,

⁹ “Go to the town of Zarephath in Sidon and live there.
I’ve told a widow in that town to give you food.”

¹⁰ When Elijah came near the town gate of Zarephath,
he saw a widow gathering sticks for a fire.

“Would you please bring me a cup of water?” he asked.

¹¹ As she left to get it, he asked,

“Would you also please bring me a piece of bread?”

¹² The widow answered,

“In the name of the living LORD your God, I swear that I don’t have any bread.
All I have is a handful of flour and a little olive oil.
I’m on my way home now with these few sticks to cook what I have
for my son and me. After that, we will starve to death.”

¹³ Elijah said,

“Everything will be fine. Do what you said.
Go home and fix something for you and your son.
But first, please make a small piece of bread
and bring it to me.

¹⁴ The LORD God of Israel has promised that your jar of flour won’t run out
and your bottle of oil won’t dry up before he sends rain for the crops.”

¹⁵ The widow went home and did exactly what Elijah had told her.

She and Elijah and her family had enough food for a long time.

¹⁶ The LORD kept the promise that his prophet Elijah had made,
and she did not run out of flour or oil.

Let us be challenged and guided by these words...

Mark 12:38-44

³⁸ And in his teaching [Jesus] said,

“Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes,
and to have salutations in the market places

³⁹ and 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 the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury,

and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury.

Many rich people put in large sums.

⁴² And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make 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 treasury.

⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance;

but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had,
her whole living.”