**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**26th February 2023**

**Mark 12:38-44**

**Gathering**

As the purple shadows fall

may we find ourselves

in a place charged with love.

A sharp kind of love

that dares face the future

and challenges the rumours

of power and fearfulness

with freedom and truth

unleashed with love set free

A love found in the One

who is made all of light

and invites us onto the path

and the way of love

that will set us free

even as love is bound

and broken for us.

Let us gather.

Let us journey.

Let us worship.

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish, and we have slipped into Lent, that season of contemplation and reflection, a costly season in many ways, as we reflect on the journey of love, each week becoming darker, and more dangerous, moving faster with each story, especially in Holy Week. Today we sit with a woman who gives her all at the temple treasury, but all is not as straightforward as it seems, but then it never is. Let us worship.

**Prayer**

Loving God

As we gather together

From wherever we are

And create this unique space of worship

May we find the silence we need

The hope we long for

The forgiveness we seek

The renewal we crave

The compassion we do not deserve

Yet, in your grace

We trust

You offer us

Your hope

Forgiveness

Renewal

And compassion

And we can live again

We are reborn

So may we hear again

Your love for us

As we gather round stories

And a saviour

Who seeks justice

And compassion

For each of us

And we find ourselves

In that place of grace

You offer each of us

Generously

Hear us

As we share together

In the Lord’s Prayer

**Scripture Introduction**

We explore the story of the widow’s mite today… Jesus has just cleansed the temple, talked about the religious authorities and how they have abandoned their true calling… wandering around in their fine robes… and he doesn’t have a lot of good things to say about the temple system…

Here he is watching in the court of women… and he notices a widow put in two coins… He doesn’t do anything… He just comments about how much she gives the temple treasury… We’ve often taken this as a wee moment to comment on how much we should give… but that… perhaps… is not actually what the story is about…

**Reading Mark 12:38-44**

As he taught, he said, ‘Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.’

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.’

**Reflection**

My first memory of this story is way back when I was Sunday School aged… and the minister of the church I grew up in was giving the children’s address… I’m sure he loathed that bit of the service… always a difficult moment…

Anyway… he told a story of a little girl who had two and a half pence in her pocket… and she asked her dad what she should give for her offering at Sunday School… and her dad… who so happened to be the treasurer… said… give what you can…

So she did… and when her dad was counting the offering he counted up the pounds and the 50p… (this was just at the turn of decimalisation by the way)… the 10s, 5s, 2s and ones… and there he saw his daughter’s half penny…

And he was angry… and he spoke to her… asking why she gave the half pence rather than the two pence which she kept for herself…

“But, I didn’t keep it to myself… I gave both the half pence and the two pence… I gave everything I had.”

And the moral of the story…?

Well… what is the moral of the story?… Its not as clear as perhaps you might imagine… You could take this wee story tucked in between the story of the cleansing of the temple… and words about its destruction… and isolate it… and extract from it… some moral about giving generously to the work of the kingdom…

And many a church institution has done so… using this seemingly simple story as the beginning of a stewardship campaign… This poor widow has given beyond her means… and throughout church history… this widow’s giving has been held up as an example towards the church… but… when you read it… you can’t help but hear Jesus’ despair and sorrow… rather than making her some kind of unsung heroine…

Because the story is bigger than the widow giving her two coins… Look at the context… In the chapter before Jesus has cleansed the temple… He’s taken on the powers of religion that keep the poor poor… extracting a tax from them in the name of God… but actually resources the institution…

And he is in and out the temple… commenting on it… throughout this chapter… when we find him again… in the court of the women… watching… ‘See what I mean!”… he is saying…

He gives a view of what the temple is doing to his disciples… It is as if he is saying… “If you want to understand what was going on with the temple cleansing… look at that widow”…

Because the widow… who has always been a chief concern to God… throughout the Hebrew Scriptures… the widow and the orphan… mentioned time and time again… and God’s bias towards them… The temple should be giving to the widow… The temple should be looking after the least… yet it is extracting from her… what little she has…

It's working in the wrong direction… in the opposite direction from the way it should be working…

They have missed the whole point of being God’s People and what God expects of the kind of society and religion God desires… Is this our invitation to reimagine our relationships in society… to change the direction of our giving and be more kingdom like… especially towards those who give so much… in facing greater consequences of economic tightening or cost of living crises or climate change… Change the direction… so that society gives back more to the widow and the orphan…

**Prayer for Others**

Loving God

May you hold the world

And bring it back to the fullness of life

May Syria and Turkey

Be your concern

May Ukraine and Russia

Be your work of peace

May Haiti and Somalia

Be your place of banquets

May all that is in crises

Be renewed with your hope

May the abused and prejudiced

Be your priority for life

May those who are ill

Receive your generosity today

And may what is yours

Become ours too

This is our prayer

The way we live in relationship with each other

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**