

25 Pentecost, Year B  
Christ Church  
Robin Teasley

Mark 12:38-44  
November 11, 2018

Maybe as you heard the Gospel this morning you groaned, “oh no, here comes another stewardship sermon!” We spent the month of October talking about stewardship and while our campaign is over, be reassured that it is never too late to pledge your commitment to God’s work among us. Yes, stewardship is about money, but it’s about so much more. So while today’s gospel may sound like another pitch for money, maybe there is something *else* going on here, something we are overlooking, someone we are not seeing.

In my travels this past week I had the opportunity to spend 2 days in airports. There is no better place to notice people than in an airport! And I noticed that there are at least 2 kinds of people - the people who notice others, and those who do not.

At times I was so disappointed in the way people behaved toward others - pushing to the front of the line, arguing about overhead luggage space, or being absolutely certain that they were in the right seat on the plane, when in reality they were not. And when the flight attendant kindly pointed this out to them, they never even apologized, but stomped off to their assigned seat in self-righteousness.

On the other hand, there were those who were intentionally observant and kind. Tall folks helping the vertically challenged lift their luggage up into the overhead storage bins, local travelers helping those from other countries navigate the airport, and those who kindly waited in their seats on the plane to allow others racing to make connections to exit the plane first.

It seems to me that airports are a microcosm of society. Our world, our country, has become so tense, so angry, so self-focused, hasn’t it? There has been a shift in our attention – a shift from concern for the well being of everyone to concern only for ourselves. We seem to be so intent on our own needs that we no longer notice the needs of those around us. How did this happen?

I am not sure the disciples with Jesus would have ever seen the widow and her two small coins if Jesus hadn’t drawn her to their attention. There were many rich people putting in large sums that day, and they would have been much more visible than this poor woman on the margins. As a widow she not only lost her husband, she also lost her place in society, her name, and her identity. She had no security, no guarantee of her next meal, no community. She had become invisible. No one saw her anymore. No one, that is, except Jesus.

Contrast her, as Jesus did, with the scribes who walk around in long robes, who like to be treated with respect, who want the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. We see this all the time – some people are just more noticeable than others for many reasons, some of them good and others not so good. Today’s scribes might be politicians, celebrities, athletes, or the notoriously wealthy.

Now I don’t believe Jesus was saying all the scribes or all the people in long robes were terrible people, or even that all widows are supposed to give their last 2 coins to the church. But perhaps

Jesus was trying to help the disciples see a disparity between those who have power and those who do not, between those who have their basic needs met and those who do not, between those who have love and kindness in their hearts and those who do not.

I imagine Jesus wanted his disciples, his followers, to learn to see the people that we may not see; the people who are not seen by most of the world today. Sometimes I wonder if Jesus wants us to admit that we do see them, but are choosing to exclude them, to judge them to ignore them. Perhaps Jesus knows that it makes us uncomfortable when we do see, because it makes us vulnerable. It convicts us of our need to respond, because we know that these dear ones on the margins are seen by God.

More than one parishioner has shared with me that they find themselves wondering whether or not they are doing all God would have them do, that while supporting outreach financially is a very good and necessary thing, they sense God inviting them to do more than write checks. They long to form relationships and share resources in both directions, because the people on the margins have many things to share with us. And I think that is what Jesus wants us to see! It's that very disparity between those who have and those who do not, that different perspective, that can connect us and help us understand that we need one another, and are all loved by God.

Remember when we were children how exciting it was to find a penny? Even a penny had worth to us. Would we be as quick to pick up one today? I noticed a penny in the seat next to me at the airport, And I asked the woman near to me if it was hers. She said, no, that it was there when she sat down. And do you know that neither of us took that penny? That's what it was worth to us.

But the widow took her two copper coins, all that she had, and gave them to God. She was willing to do what she could do. *And Jesus saw that.*

Those two small coins can represent whatever it is that we have been given. It's all a matter of perspective as to how valuable something is. What about our time? What about gifts of art, music, cooking, building, caring for others, feeding others, organizing, teaching, praying...the list is endless. As a community of disciples when we share these gifts, our own small coins, with one another, it becomes pastoral care, it becomes formation, it becomes worship and these things equip us to reach beyond our walls to share with others.

It's not about how many pennies or thousands of dollars we have, it's about noticing all of God's people. It's about responding to our neighbors with love and kindness with everything we have. Can we see what Jesus was showing the disciples? This is not really about a large bank account, or filling out a pledge card. It is about the amazing worth of every human being in the eyes of God!

Just as we take time to watch and notice God's people in airports, in our community, and in places around the world, seeing the ways they show love for God and neighbor, these same people may be noticing us and seeing the ways we show our love for God and neighbor. Look for the people Jesus sees and loves. And then see them and love them as Jesus does. Amen.