

Generosity Week – All-Age Eucharist | Luke 21:1–4

Luke 21.1-4

The Widow's Offering

1He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; 2he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3He said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; 4for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.'

Hold up two small coins.

I wonder what you could buy with these?

Two little pennies.

Not very much these days, is it?

Perhaps you couldn't even buy a sweet with them.

Now, imagine someone gave you £20 (hold up 2x £10) Which would you rather have?

I think most of us would probably choose the £20!

But in our Gospel reading today, Jesus sees things rather differently.

He's sitting in the Temple, watching people putting their money into the treasury. Like our collection plate or contactless giving machine.

Some very wealthy people come along and put in large gifts.

And then a poor widow comes along. She has just two tiny coins, and she puts them both in.

To most people, her gift probably seemed almost nothing.

But Jesus says something surprising.

He says that she has given more than all the others.

How can that be?

Well, Jesus sees something that other people might miss.

And as we begin our Generosity Week today, I think this little story has three important things to teach us.

Three words I hope we can all remember:

NOTICE. THANK. SHARE.

1. NOTICE – Jesus notices the little things

The first word is NOTICE.

Jesus notices the widow.

In a busy Temple, with lots of people coming and going, he sees someone who could easily have been overlooked.

He doesn't just notice the wealthy people making their large donations.

He notices this woman, and her two tiny coins.

And he understands something about her gift that nobody else can see.

For the wealthy people, their gifts came from what they had left over.

But for this widow, those two coins were all she had to live on.

Her gift was small in monetary value, but it came at an enormous personal cost.

And Jesus noticed.

I wonder, have you ever done something kind and nobody noticed?

Perhaps you tidied something away without being asked.

Perhaps you helped someone at school, at work or in church.

Perhaps you did the washing-up, made a cup of tea, or checked on a neighbour.

And nobody said thank you!

Sometimes it can feel as though the little things don't really matter.

But Jesus reminds us that they do.

Because God sees things differently from the way the world often sees them.

We live in a world that likes big things.

Big achievements. Big announcements. Big amounts of money. Big successes.

But God's love is often revealed in the small, ordinary acts of kindness and generosity that happen every day.

A smile at the church door.

A phone call to someone who is lonely.

Someone quietly making sure the church is ready for worship.

Someone giving what they can to support the life of the church.

Someone remembering another person in their prayers.

None of these things might seem very dramatic.

But they matter.

And Jesus notices.

So our first word is NOTICE.

Notice the little things. Notice the people who are easily overlooked. Notice the kindness and generosity happening all around us.

Because Jesus does.

2. THANK – Generosity begins with gratitude

Our second word is THANK.

And I think this is a particularly important word as we begin Generosity Week.

Because before we ask what more we might give, it's right that we stop and say thank you.

Thank you to God for all that we have received.

And thank you to one another for all the ways in which people give, serve and support the life of this church.

I wonder if we could think together for a moment.

How many different people does it take to make a church like ours work?

There are people who welcome us at the door.

People who read the Bible and lead our prayers.

People who sing and make music.

People who serve at the altar.

People who arrange flowers, clean the church, polish the brass, wash the linen, and look after the building.

People who prepare refreshments and offer hospitality.

People who work with children and young people.

People who visit those who are ill or lonely.

People who serve on the PCC, look after the finances, organise events, deal with paperwork, and do all sorts of things that many of us never even see.

And there are those who give regularly and faithfully to support the church financially, helping to make our worship, ministry, mission and care for others possible.

And there are children and young people who bring their energy, questions, laughter, ideas and gifts to our church family.

Every one of those contributions matters.

Some are very visible.

Others happen quietly, behind the scenes.

Some involve money.

Others involve time, skills, energy, kindness or prayer.

And today I want to say, on behalf of our whole church family:

Thank you.

Thank you for what you give.

Thank you for the time you offer.

Thank you for the things you do that nobody else sees.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your kindness and your love.

And thank you for helping to make this church a place where people can encounter God's love.

Perhaps we could do something together.

Now, when I count to three, let's all say a really big "THANK YOU!"

One, two, three...

THANK YOU!

And perhaps during this week, we could do something even better.

We could actually tell that person how much we appreciate them.

3. SHARE – We all have something to give

Our third word is SHARE.

And here's a question for everyone, children and adults alike.

Do you have to be rich to be generous?

"No!"

Do you have to be grown-up to be generous?

"No!"

Do you have to be particularly clever, talented or important to be generous?

"No!"

That's the wonderful thing about generosity.

It's something we can all take part in.

We all have something to share.

Some of us can give money to support the work of the church, and that really matters.

The financial gifts people make, whether large or small, help sustain our worship, maintain our buildings, support our ministry and enable us to serve our community.

And as we begin Generosity Week, it's good for each of us to reflect prayerfully on what we can give, according to our own circumstances.

But generosity isn't only about money.

We can share our time.

We can share our talents.

We can share our kindness.

We can share our attention, our encouragement, our prayers.

And we can share God's love.

As we begin Generosity Week, perhaps we might each think of one new way we could be generous.

One thing we could do.

One gift we could share.

One person we could help.

Not because we feel guilty.

Not because someone is keeping score.

But because we are grateful for all that God has given us, and we want to share that love with others.

In a few moments, we'll come to the heart of our worship today.

We'll gather around the altar for the Eucharist, every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we come to give thanks.

We bring bread and wine.

Simple, ordinary things.

And through them, we remember and celebrate the extraordinary generosity of God.

The God who gives us life.

The God who loves us without counting the cost.

The God who, in Jesus Christ, gives himself for the life of the world.

So as we begin Generosity Week, let's remember our three words.

NOTICE – Notice the gifts and the people we might otherwise overlook.

THANK – Give thanks to God and to everyone who makes our church what it is.

SHARE – Remember that we all have something to give.

We began thinking about two tiny coins.
Easy to overlook.
But Jesus noticed.

And perhaps that's the invitation for us this week.
To notice more.
To be more thankful.
And to share more generously.

Because when we offer what we have with love, however small it might seem, we become part of God's generosity at work in the world.

Amen.