



Nov. 11, 2018 Mark 12:38-44 & 1 Kgs. 17: 10-16

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [How is Love Calling Us?](#)

Rolheiser, Fr Ron. [The Danger of Riches](#)

[New Melleray Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

In Jesus' day the people to watch out for were the people who had structured things for their own benefit. Jesus teaches that we can spot them when they say one thing and do another. One person looks down on another who hasn't the money or position of power, yet votes for things that will make it virtually impossible for that person to achieve the benefits of hard work or education. Another person thinks that if the other just worked hard enough God would bless them too. We may even find such a person when looking in the mirror. Who are the ones we need to watch out for today?

Mark 12:38-44

38 As he taught, Jesus said, "**Watch out for** the teachers of the law. They like to **walk around in flowing robes** and be **greeted** in the **marketplaces**, 39 and have the most **important seats** in the **synagogues** and the places of **honor** at **banquets**. 40 They **devour widows'** houses and for a **show** make **lengthy prayers**. Such men will be **punished most**

severely." 41 Jesus **sat down opposite** the place where the **offerings** were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the **temple treasury**. **Many rich people** threw in **large amounts**. 42 But a **poor widow** came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a **fraction of a penny**. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this **poor widow** has put more into the **treasury** than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their **wealth**; but she, out of her **poverty**, put in **everything**--all she had to live on."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: The widow did the right thing because it was the right thing not because she expected a reward. When was the last time I did that?

PRAYER: There is a Jewish Meditation that teaches: "On our inbreath, we should concentrate on receiving life from God. That inbreath is life sustaining. On our outbreath we should give everything we have back to the universe. Our outbreath may be the last we ever take, and, at the end of our life, we want to make sure we have given everything we have back to the world". Lord, help me to realize this truth so that I, like the widow, can live in trust as she did. Amen

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

WATCH OUT FOR / PUNISHED MOST SEVERELY: Jesus is using this example to teach his disciples a radically different understanding of God. They are not to uncritically accept the common sense understanding of their day. In fact if they do, they, like those parading about, will reap the 'rewards' of their errors.

How can this challenge our understanding of Jesus' God?

WALK AROUND / SAT DOWN: These two activities are contrasted here to make sure that everyone notices the person moving about.

Have you had someone 'sit down' to listen to you? How did this make a difference in what you shared or learned?

FLOWING ROBES / IMPORTANT SEATS: Both these descriptive phrases indicate that significant people and places are involved here. In a world that believes that God rewards the good and punishes the bad it is easy to see this as a sure sign of God's approval.

Are there examples of this way of thinking in your life? Can you think of a book title or workshop that is popular today that espouses this theology?

MARKET PLACES / SYNAGOGUE: Both these places were sites of large public gatherings and involved the people almost daily. It was where you connected with God and with each other.

Where would Jesus go to find a setting for this teaching today?

SHOW / LENGHTY PRAYERS: It is interesting that those wanting to be noticed for their piety, often just “happened” to be out in the middle of the street when it came time to have the required daily prayers. This often set up the naive to be cheated later on by these “pious” folk.

Has someone ever fooled you by wearing his or her piety as a badge of honor? How did that affect you?

OPPOSITE: Jesus is seated opposite the temple. Mark situates him in contrast to the site where God is supposedly situated. His theology is apparently opposite to the temples’ teaching as well.

Have you ever been in a situation that put you on the opposite side of the official teaching of the church? What put you there? How did you resolve the issue?

OFFERING: The temple had 13 separate chests to receive the offerings that people donated. Each was dedicated to a special purpose.

How do you feel when there is an extra collection at worship? Which appeal do you respond to most often and why?

RICH PEOPLE / A POOR WIDOW: Again the contrast between the many rich people and the single poor widow. Mark remembers Jesus using contrasts to bring home his teachings.

Have you ever been a person giving all you have to someone or something even though it seemed pathetically small? Why did you do that?

LARGE AMOUNTS / A FRACTION OF A PENNY: The fraction of a penny seems bigger than the large amount in this example. This is another instance of “with God all things are possible”.

How does this help you understand the mystery of God? When has your penny dwarfed the purse of the millionaire? Has anyone ever given you his or her last ‘penny’ and it turned into a fortune for you?

TREASURY / EVERYTHING: The treasury of the temple was the central bank of Jesus’ day. It was the place where people recognized their dependence on God’s gifts, and made those gifts available to those with less.

Are there places that function like the treasury for you today? Where is it? How did you give it this importance?

WEALTH / POVERTY: We end with another set of contrasts. Often our wealth can cause us to be poor in the worst way, and our poverty can be the source of many riches.

Can you think of any examples of this paradox in your life?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mk. 12:38f // Mt. 23:1-7; Lk. 11:43; 20:45f; **Mk. 12:41-44** // Lk. 21:1-4;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: I Kgs. 17: 10-16; [Ps. 146: 7-10](#); Heb. 9: 24-28; Mk. 12:38-44; Revised Common Lectionary: Ruth: 3:1-5; 4:13-17; [Ps. 127](#); Heb. 9: 24-28; Mk. 12:38-44;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

But it seems that her sense of well-being, and her sense of security, do not lie in what she possesses. Rather, it rests in the network of relationships that sustain her. She belongs to a community who care for one another. That is not mentioned, but we do see Jesus noticing. He is taking care. And her gift is a sign of her taking care, in turn. Her trust in others is signaled in her willingness to give of herself. She knows others will reciprocate. She is not locked in an isolation of strict self-reliance. Between the isolation of individualism and dependency, she lives in a world of interdependence, each relying on the other, each giving to the extent they can, even if it is a widow's mite. That is the real world we live in. Pg. 163. Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015.

At present, many of the cells of this Christ Body are unaware of their divine calling, unaware of how special they are in the eyes of God, and unconscious of the fact that they are already living their lives as part of this Cosmic Body. For Teilhard, this Cosmic Body is meant to become fully conscious of itself in every cell of its being in such a way that every cell is also conscious of the whole Body's magnificent destiny. When this Christ Body realizes itself as the divine reality it has always been meant to be, that moment will be what Teilhard calls the Omega Point. (See Rev 1:8)

From a review of Teilhard de Chardin: The Divine Milieu Explained. Teilhard Perspective Vol 41, Nu.2

Mk.12.38–44: Rich scribes and a poor widow (Mt 23.6; Lk 20.46–47; 21.1–4). Matthew 23 develops this critique. Mark’s version does not mention Pharisees, and is more explicitly economic: the class pretensions of the scribes lead directly to a comparison with a poor widow (omitted in Matthew). 43–44: Some scholars suggest that Mark is critical of the woman’s over-generosity, but the text does not suggest that. The Temple is a place where both rich and poor can contribute. Pg. 96. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

"If one reaches the point where understanding fails, this is not a tragedy. It is simply a reminder to stop thinking and start looking. Perhaps there is nothing to figure out after all; perhaps we only need to wake up." - Thomas Merton –

If you really want to know God, go to his people. Go to your barber and talk about God. Tell the carpenter about what you're experiencing. Take time to read the lives of the saints. They always knock you off your feet because they tell you the preoccupations you have aren't the ones you should have. Get in touch with those women and men who did crazy things like falling in love with God - Henri J. M. Nouwen

If we would only give, just once, the same amount of reflection to what we want to get out of life that we give to the question of what to do with two weeks' vacation, we would be startled at our false standards and the aimless procession of our busy days.... Dorothy Canfield Fisher

"At the root of all war is fear: not so much the fear that men have of one another as the fear they have of *everything*. It is not merely that they do not trust one another; they do not even trust themselves. ... They cannot trust anything because they have ceased to believe in God." Thomas Merton [New Seeds of Contemplation](#)).

First come the scribes, who are described as devouring the house, or estates, of widows. One can think of a number of ways in which widows can be cheated of their property. Mark doesn't specify. But apparently, they are accused of using their position to take advantage. In contrast, the scribes are shown failing to live the piety they profess. The second contrast comes in the second vignette, in the story of the widow. She is compared to the rich donors, who give substantial donations that are no real cost to themselves. No doubt it is recorded on plaques in front of the building, as archaeologists have found in synagogues in Asia Minor and other parts of the Mediterranean world. However, the widow offers only the "widow's mite," as it has come to be known — an almost negligible amount. However, Jesus commends her for donating a greater portion of her livelihood. Then, as now, there was the myth of the lazy, ungenerous poor, serving as a convenient self-serving rationalization for those not feeling particularly generous. It is a myth this story deliberately counters. The plight of the widow is a recurrent theme. Witness column for 11/8/15. [Fr. Robert Beck](#)

[David Korten](#) posted Mar 22, 2017: The beginning of a challenging article.

Congratulations, you won—you are the last and richest person on Earth. In the security of your sunless underground bunker, you will be the last to die in a dying Earth's paroxysm of fire and flood. In a recent column for YES! Magazine, Chuck Collins, "born on third base" social activist and commentator, has a message for the superrich who are buying "bug out" survivalist escape homes in Kansas missile silos, mountain fortresses in the Rockies, and getaway farms in New Zealand: Your money won't save you from the social and environmental collapse now unfolding. Join with other members of your class who are investing in "community, regional, and global efforts to address the climate crisis and extreme inequalities."

[Another article](#): Survival of the Richest-The wealthy are plotting to leave us behind

The evil of riches, then, for institutions, for nations, for individuals, is that those who possess or seek to possess almost invariably overvalue possessions and so cease to live creatively. They stop loving God with all the heart and all the soul and all the strength and all the mind. They stop loving their neighbors, too. When you find a person of means who is not either a self-centered bore or a low creature, you may know that God has worked a miracle.- Bernard Iddings Bell (1886-1958), God is Not

We cannot possess, or even enjoy anything in itself, but only in God. Thomas Merton

We are so inclined to cover up our poverty and ignore it that we often miss the opportunity to discover God, who dwells in it. Let's dare to see our poverty as the land where our treasure is hidden. Henri Nouwen

Essentially, poverty is a lack of means to accomplish what one desires or needs, be it lack of money, relationships, influence, power, intellectual ability, physical strength, freedom, or dignity. Richard Rohr

There has been a permanent state of class warfare of the rich against the poor throughout history, but for some strange reason it is only called class warfare when it is the poor against the rich! Richard Rohr

If those who owe us nothing gave us nothing, how poor we would be. ~Antonio Porchia~

No bird can fly without opening its wings, and no one can love without exposing their heart. Pg. 239. Nepo, Mark. [The Book of Awakening](#). Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000.

The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority. - Martin Luther King Jr.

Poor in spirit" means an inner emptiness and humility, a beginner's mind, and to live without a need for personal righteousness or reputation. It is the "powerlessness" of Alcoholics Anonymous' First Step. The Greek word Matthew uses for "poor" is ptochoi, which

literally means, “the very empty ones, those who are crouching.” They are the bent-over beggars, the little nobodies of this world who have nothing left, who aren’t self-preoccupied or full of themselves in any way. Jesus is saying: “Happy are you, you’re the freest of all. Richard Rohr

Poverty is when we recognize that myself-by itself-is powerless and ineffective. Pg. 71
Rohr, Richard. *Eager to Love*. Franciscan Media, Cincinnati, OH. 2014

Even the smallest action done with a loving appreciation of life can profoundly touch other human beings. Duane Elgin

...our very breath can serve as a reminder that life is only possible if the exchange of inner and outer is undisturbed. Letting things in, feeling their impact, and, in turn, letting things out, expressing cleanly what we feel, is a spiritual practice that rinses the mind and heart. pgs- 65-6 Nepo, Mark. [The Book of Awakening](#). Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000.

"To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything He has given us -- and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from Him. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference." Thomas Merton



Jewish coinage. began during the period of Jewish independence under Hasmonean rule. (cira 134 G.E.) Greek, Roman, Tyrian and other coins were current in the Holy Land during New Testament times. Mark 12:42 records the story of the widow’s mites: “Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.” The quadrans was the smallest Roman coin minted at the time. The “mites” were leptons, the smallest Greek copper coins. Borowski, Oded, *Shekels to Talents: Money in the Ancient World..* [Biblical Archaeology Review](#). 9-10/93. Pages 68-70

Jesus publicly criticizes their (the scribes) behavior as a ceaseless grasping for honor. The Talmud notes that when two people meet in the marketplace, the one inferior in knowledge of the Law should greet the other first. Since no one knew the Law as well as the scribes, they sought out and basked in this recognition. In the synagogue the scribes claimed the best seats which were those on a platform facing the people. People seated on these chairs rested their backs against the same wall that held the ark which contained the Torah scrolls.

At banquets, the best seats were reserved for people of importance like experts in the Law. Jesus concludes his attack by accusing the scribes of ‘devouring widows! houses.’ No sooner has Jesus spoken than a widow comes along and places two of the smallest coins in first-century Palestine into the coffers, thus fulfilling her religious duty.

Pilch, John J. *The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle B*. Collegeville, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1996. Page 160.

. The words of the proud man impose silence on all others, so that he alone may be heard. The humble man speaks only in order to be spoken to. The humble man asks nothing but an alms, then waits and listens. It is not speaking that breaks our silence, but the anxiety to be heard. Thomas Merton. *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1958): 91.

"The world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains, rivers and cities; but to know someone here and there who thinks and feels with us, and though distant, is close to us in spirit—this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden."— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The shore thirsts, but does not own the ocean that keeps it soft. So, too, the heart and all it loves. Pg -219.
Nepo, Mark. [The Book of Awakening](#). Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000.

The Roman engineer and city planner Vitruvius said streets must run counter to the wind, not like badly planned Mytilene on Lesbos, where, when the north wind blew, the inhabitants “cannot stand about in the streets and alleys, owing to the severe cold.” Standing about was part of city life.

“Beware of the scribes,” said Jesus, “who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the marketplaces.” In l’ Aquila, the Piazza Duomo in the morning was more than a market. It was the city’s living room, the arena for social life. You’d see a man reading the paper, standing still and holding it open before him, knowing someone would soon come along to discuss the news; you’d see friends meeting, saying “let’s go for a coffee,” which might be an espresso downed in pungent gulps or a cappuccino taken at leisure. Whittemore, Christine. [A Livable City](#) Parabola. Winter:1993 pages 53f.

The deep secrecy of my own being is often hidden from me by my own estimate of what I am."
Merton Thomas, *No Man is an Island* by (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, Inc. 1955), page 125.

“In order to find God in ourselves, we must stop looking at ourselves, stop checking and verifying ourselves in the mirror of our own futility, and be content to *be* in Him and to do whatever He wills, according to our limitations, judging our acts not in the light of our own illusions, but in the light of His reality which is all around us in the things and people we live with.”

Thomas Merton “No Man is an Island” Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, New York 1955: Page 120

To know God without being God-like is like trying to swim without entering water. Orest Bedrij

"Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. Yet it is the law of all progress that is made by passing through some stages of instability and that may take a very long time. And so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually. Let them grow. Let them shape themselves without undue haste. Do not try to force them on as though you could be today what time - that is to say, grace - and circumstances acting on your own goodwill will make you tomorrow..... Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Trust sets an environment of reliable conditions that enable an agent to make a judgment of how much to risk. David Batstone

To a preacher who kept saying, "We must put God in our lives," the Master said, "He is already there. Our business is to recognize this. - Anthony de Mello, "One Minute Wisdom"

The only way to make rapid progress along the path of divine love is to remain very little and to put all our trust in Almighty God. That is what I have done." Therese de Lisieux –

SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

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