



SIEBENQUELL

Reflection on Mk 12, 41-44

The Gift of the Poor Widow



QUELLENANGABE: ULLA PIECHACZEK, RÉUNION 2013

And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury chest. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. 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. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.

(Mk 12,41-44)

»Today«, this was her firm resolution, »today I will take the time to speak with him.«

She smiled quietly to herself. »You certainly are a little bit crazy«, she said to herself. »To speak with him! As if he were a ‚personality‘«.

Yet, her resolution held firm. She set out on her way. She only took what was »most important« with her, as a silent companion.

The way to the temple was known to her. She could find it blindfolded, for she had traversed it so often. Lightfooted in younger years, in mature years she now dragged her cares along, but always this certitude as well: With my God I can overcome walls.

Since the death of her husband, however, a heaviness had crept into her life, which she only had borne with difficulty. She had become destitute and those closest to her were themselves destitute. The burden of her life, which had been hoisted on her by loneliness, had entered into a dark partnership with an inexplicable emptiness which - she was not sure how she should express it - had left her hollow and unfulfilled on the inside.

»I miss him still« she murmured to herself. »I cannot deny it.« Her only consolation in all those years was the daily trip to the temple. There she had found her friend. She had to laugh again. This time louder. »What a crazy woman you have become!« - As she said it, it grew a little warmer in her heart.

In the meantime she knew him well. She knew, that no one had built up such a "personal" relationship to him as she had done over all the years. Perhaps because she had invested so much of her heart, so much honesty. She had invested her life's story. Thanks be to God.

In all this, when you looked at it from his point of view, she was, thus was her suspicion, a person who truly did not have much to offer. There were others for that. For them the trumpets sounded when they came to him and everyone turned to him. Aha, there was someone once more who had something to offer, there was someone once again who did not count the cost. May he be blessed.

No, no, the relationship to him was of a different variety.

In the meantime, she had sought a place close to him with the »most important«, that she had; inconspicuous, but close enough in order to be able to speak with him. With a view of the Mount of Olives, as if she was awaiting salvation from there.

»I have to talk to you«, she murmured somewhat self-consciously, more to herself than to him.

»You have become my chest of sorrows. For so many years I have come to you and have entrusted my sorrow and worries to you. In all the years, I have found with you my trust in God again when it had slipped out of my heart. You know the temple and the people better than the priests and the temple servants. Near you, the bitter tears of life flow and not the blood of animals, as it does by the altars of sacrifice over there. You know the sorrows of the supplicants as much as those of the guilty. You know the humble and the arrogant, and yet you never breathe a word of it.

You are different than I am. You are often stuffed full of money and, surely, with all too human stories as well. I, on the other hand, am stuffed full of sorrows, and yet, I feel so... so hollow, so unfulfilled. And only here, with you, when I have entrusted my very last thing to you, does my heart grow lighter. I do not even know why.«

»Perhaps«, the treasury chest seemed to say to her, »perhaps the mystery lies therein. I also always experience my own lightness most strongly when I have been emptied. Do not believe for a moment that it is a good feeling to literally be stuffed to the gills with money. No, when I am empty I come to the bottom of myself. And: When I am entirely empty, I feel so connected with the empty, dark room here in the temple, the Holy of Holies. The moments of my emptiness bring me closest to God, the All Holy.

By contrast, being stuffed full of money is the hardest part of my being here, filled with the worry, I could lose myself thereby.«

The widow looked at him wide-eyed.

»Now you have awakened the voice of my yearning. Yes, this hollowness is unbearable. The emptiness of which you speak sets free. I want to be free, open. That is my wish, that is what I was tracking, to be free, purified, so that God can fill the space in me.«

She looked almost tenderly at the offering box.

»If only everyone here had your wisdom, the priests and the servants of the temple. If only they would care more for the emptiness of the hearts instead of worrying about the fullness of the treasury chest. What is the temple worth, if it closes the access to the Holy of Holies?«

And with a glance at the Mount of Olives she added: «I wait for him who can make himself so empty and open that only God has room within him. Then we will not need the temple any longer and all the busyness that stuffs us full.«

With a greater than usual lightness, she gave her humble coins, knowing fully, that it was something more fundamental that she was placing in the chest: her heart's blood, that rolled newly and more gracefully through her veins.

»The few coins are for the temple. It is not worth a penny anymore«, she whispered heretically to him.

Upon leaving, she heard how a Rabbi told his followers about a woman who had won a new openness for God out of the experience of her deficiency.

»Thank you, Lord, for this new breadth in my heart. Thank you, Lord, that you taken up residence in me«, she prayed.

Arthur Pfeifer SAC, Vallendar 2010