



150TH ANNIVERSARY SERMON



Title:

My Mite Plus God's Might Equals Mighty Army

Text:

Mark 12: 41-44 (primary); Ephesians 3:20 (secondary)

Theme:

If God is working through us, even our smallest talents and meager abilities can become mighty acts of witness to God.

Introduction:

On the day after their nuptials, a young couple was opening their wedding presents. Among the boxes of toasters, blenders, table cloths and towels, was a small package wrapped in plain brown paper. The gift didn't have a name tag on it but they knew without a doubt who it came from. During their reception the day before, a man named John, some distant relative of the groom, came into the hall looking dirty and disheveled. John lived a hard existence, living between homeless shelters, and rarely enjoying any human contact. If he spoke at all it was to himself, under his breath. He was the sort of person people would avoid on the street, crossing over to the other side. But, as he was connected to the groom's family in some way, it was thought that an invitation should be extended to him. Most were doubtful that he would show, but to everyone's surprise, he did. The groom's mother kept a watchful eye on him throughout the



reception, but he said very little to anyone. Well before the evening ended, John walked up to the bride and groom, and with a look on his face that betrayed just a hint of emotion, said, "Thanks for inviting me." As he walked by the gift table on his way out the door he reached into his worn and ragged overcoat, and placed a brown package on the table - the very package they were now holding.

Opening the package they found an old cardboard box that contained a small, penny-sized coin. The words on the coin were unfamiliar as it evidently came from another country. Smiling, they placed the coin back in the box and placed the box on a shelf where it would sit for some years. "Oh, John!" said the groom. "Thanks for the gift, I guess."

Years later they happened upon the coin again. Thinking there was something more to the coin than meets the eye, the husband took it to an antique dealer. Upon polishing the coin and examining it the antique dealer, smiled knowingly at the groom. "This is a solid Swiss gold coin," he said. "Small, but valuable. Worth about \$800 dollars." The husband gasped. John's gift was actually more valuable than any other wedding gift they had received! And how unappreciated it had been until now.

Had Jesus not been watching the people deposit their offerings into the temple treasury that day, another valuable gift would have gone unnoticed and appreciated. Mark records in his Gospel that among the pressing crowds putting their offerings into the treasury there were many wealthy people putting in large sums. While this was happening, a lone widow approached and deposited...

Her Mite

(Anchor Verse: Mark 12:41-42)

Unlike the valuable gold coin that the bride and groom received in the opening illustration, the widow's 'mite' or coin, in purely monetary terms was absolutely



worthless. A famous comedian once remarked that because he was \$-20 overdraft with his bank that he would need twenty dollars “just to be broke.” Similarly, the widow’s two copper coins were not even worth a fraction of a dollar, but a fraction of a penny (two-thirds of a cent)! On the surface, there was nothing praiseworthy about this offering. Did she feel a sense of humiliation as she deposited her two coins, as the rich and powerful deposited their much larger sums? Scripture doesn’t afford us the widow’s voice or even her thoughts on the matter, but the small offering does suggest a desperate, pitiful poverty. Yet as small as the amount was, scripture reveals quite startlingly that it was “all she had to live on.”

The story highlights that one of the foremost commands of the Torah, to look after the welfare of widows and orphans was not being obeyed (see Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 24:17; and 24:20-21). How else could the widow’s desperate poverty be explained? But wanting to honor God in whatever way she could, without knowing what she would do to supply her next meal, she offered her coins as an offering unto the Lord.

Reflecting on the ways that we offer ourselves to the Lord, we might ask the question, what constitutes...

My Mite

Mechanically perhaps, we say that we must offer God our time, our gifts, and our talents. We are encouraged by scripture to offer a certain percentage of our income in the form of a ‘tithe’ and so often our teachings on stewardship are just aimed at helping us reach that 10% benchmark. But what if instead of drawing up a mental list of what we give to God, we instead reflected on what we hold back? George Müller said, “God judges what we give by what we keep.” What are we keeping from God? What would it look like to offer our all to Him?

One such example of a life given fully to God was that of a young servant girl who upon hearing the Gospel message preached by a dynamic, female



preacher, offered herself not only to the Lord but also in service to the preacher and her large family. A life spent in domestic service, doing work that was hard but behind-the-scenes, work that to the outside world was unnoticed and unappreciated is hardly the beginning of a great story. Only God could see the immense value in this woman who offered her whole self to Him to be used for His purposes. Domestic chores eventually gave way to evangelistic work and when the mother and father of the household, Catherine and William Booth, were seeking the very best leaders to commence operations in the United States, they came to call on this same young woman. Led by Commissioner George Scott Railton, Captain Emma Westbrook and six other 'Hallelujah Lasses', courageously and fearlessly 'opened fire' on the streets of New York on March 10, 1880. Serving The Salvation Army in America for the rest of her officership and the rest of her life, she witnessed the growth of the movement from a few individuals to many thousands strong.

General Evangeline Booth, years later in speaking of this mighty servant with an even mightier servant's heart remarked of her that "...she was truly remarkable in her courage. She was small of stature, a little woman...but it was impossible to intimidate her...She would face any physical danger...if there was good to be done. This courage she maintained to the very last. It carried her over weariness to the point of exhaustion in her service to the Flag and to others." A life that may have gone unnoticed by the world - changed the world, because her 'mite' was combined with...

God's Might:

(Anchor Verse: Mark 12:43-44)

Jesus took note of the woman offering her two coins not because her offering was so small, but because it was so large. Considering that she had absolutely nothing left, one could even call her gift, extravagant! Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on." (Mark 12:43-44, NIV) This self-sacrificial giving exhibited in the



widow's actions arrested Jesus' attention. It was a teaching moment for his disciples whose attention would have naturally fallen on the offerings made by the wealthy members of Israel's financial and social elite. Instead, they are asked to look to the widow as an example; her offering was given significance not because it was expensive. In the eyes of the world it was utterly insignificant, not even worth a penny. Rather, her offering was significant because in contrast to the offerings of the rich, it represented all that she had. There was nothing held back.

Matthew 6:2 tells us that when wealthy religious leaders in Jesus' day would give alms to the poor, they would have a trumpet blown to announce to everyone their good deed. There were no trumpets blown that day when the widow gave her offering, but in that moment as her actions caught the eye of the Savior, surely there was rejoicing in heaven. For God accepted and blessed the widow's mite and added to it his 'might'. The boy who offered his loaves and fishes, combined with God's might, fed thousands! (John 6:5-15). Peter and John, who were ordinary, unschooled men, combined with God's might, astonished the crowds because "they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13) Combined with God's might, the widow's offering became an example to believers on how to give. It was gracious living and costly giving: Because she, Jesus said, "...put in everything." (v. 43)

What happens when we truly "put in everything"? What happens when we give God our all, even if in the eyes of the world it's just a 'mite'? Our mite plus God's might, equals a

Mighty Army

"Like a *MIGHTY ARMY*, moves the church of God. Brothers we are treading, where the saints have trod."

Saints, like Major Emma Westbrook who 'put in everything', becoming a servant-evangelist, bringing the Gospel to a new land. Saints, like George Scott Railton, a passionate young man and failed shipping clerk, who threw all his might into



evangelism, who endured hunger and deprivation just to share with others that God so loved the world. When he offered himself fully to God, under the mentoring of the same godly leaders who inspired Major Emma Westbrook, Railton became a true leader - a Commissioner, whose 'commission' was to seek and to save the lost.

As they prepared to embark for America wearing their new Salvation Army uniforms, perhaps they felt unsure and unworthy of the significant task at hand. But Catherine Booth, the Army Mother, saw their true value that day, not as a tarnished coin placed far and away on a distant shelf, but as a shining piece of gold, immensely valuable. Though the offering was small in the world's eyes, a former domestic servant and shipping clerk, she saw in the offering of their lives a 'pearl of great price', assuring them with the words: "You look young and some people think insignificant, but so are we all. No sacrifice is too great for the soldier of Jesus Christ."

A MIGHTY ARMY is one where its soldiers and officers give their all to God. A MIGHTY ARMY gives sacrificially and is willing to forgo the pleasures and comforts of this world in order to store up treasure for the next. A MIGHTY ARMY sees the value in all people, proclaiming that "God is able to do much more than we ask or think through his mighty power working in us." (Ephesians 3:20). Be part of this MIGHTY ARMY, today!

Prayer

Mighty God, we thank you for the privilege that is ours to serve in this mighty Army. Help us give all of ourselves. When we hold something back, may we remember that you gave your all to us. Thank you for the example of the widow in Mark 12, whose gift was held above the rest because she gave out of her poverty, everything she had. Your word tells us that "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Help us serve with humility, as we, like the widow, seek to give you our all. Lead your Army, Lord, into mighty conquests for the advancement of your kingdom. We pray this in the name of our MIGHTY Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.



Mighty Token Appeal

In your hand is a Mighty Token of Love. Its value is not to be thought of in financial terms but in what it represents. This token represents a *valuable* opportunity to share the love of Christ. First, perform an act of love and kindness for someone. Next, pass on the token to that someone and encourage them to "pass it on". As you place it in their hands, tell them about your own personal relationship with Jesus. You can direct them to the saconnects.org website, but speak to them about your own journey with Christ - what He has done in your life and why you serve Him. What looks on the surface like a 'small' act of evangelism is in fact a 'mighty' witness. If every Junior and Senior Soldier takes up this challenge there will be 40,000 acts of love carried out in Jesus' name!

Remember, this Mighty Token of Love equals 'Your Mite'. God will add 'His Might' as you witness. It just may be the offering that moves this 'Mighty Army, forward.