

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – 1 Kings 17:8-16

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, **9** “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” **10** So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” **11** And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” **12** And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” **13** And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. **14** For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’” **15** And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. **16** The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

17:8-16 Through Elijah, the Lord miraculously provides food for a widow in Zarephath. This story illustrates God’s never-ending goodness. He daily and richly provides for all our needs, blessings us far beyond what we deserve or what we ask. (TLSB)

17:9 *Zarephath of Sidon.* A coastal town located between Tyre and Sidon in the territory ruled by Jezebel’s father Ethbaal (16:31). Elijah is commanded to go and reside in the heart of the very land from which the Baal worship now being promoted in Israel had come. (CSB)

Small coastal town of Phoenicia between Tyre and Sidon. (TLSB)

Zarephath was outside of Israel, near Sidon, the hometown of Queen Jezebel. Would someone from the idolatrous land really provide for a prophet of the Lord? Could a woman (a widow at that) feed another mouth during a famine? (PBC)

widow. Jesus’ only excursion beyond the borders of ancient Israel was “to the region of Tyre and Sidon,” where He, too, met a Syrophenician woman of great faith (Mk 7:24–30). (TLSB)

Elijah, as the bearer of God’s word, was now to be sustained by human hands, but they were the hands of a poor widow facing starvation (v. 12). She was, moreover, from outside the circle of God’s own people (cf. Lk 4:25–26)—in fact, she was from the pagan nation that at that time (much like Egypt earlier and Babylon later) represented the forces arrayed against God’s kingdom. (CSB)

He had made provisions to take further care of His prophet, and would in due time influence her heart to do His bidding. (Kretzmann)

17:10 *So he arose.* Elijah’s reliance on the Lord demonstrated the faith in the Lord that Israel should have been living by. (CSB)

widow – Jesus refers to the widow of Zarephath in Luke 4:26. There were many widows in Israel who, theoretically, could have provided for Elijah. But God pronounced judgment on His people’s

unbelief by sending His prophet to a Gentile woman. When God's own people worship idols instead of the Lord, then God sends His prophets and His blessings to others. (PBC)

gate...gathering stick – Odd place to gather firewood. “Stalks” could be intended (cf. Josh 2:6), as threshing floors were often near the city gate (cf. 22:10) (TLSB)

Odd place to gather firewood. “Stalks” could be intended (cf. Jsh 2:6), as threshing floors were often near the city gate (cf. 22:10). (TLSB)

Bring me a little water. Test of generosity. Cf. Gn 24:17–20. (TLSB)

17:11 *bring me a morsel of bread* – The smallest-sized loaf, in the form of a cake or bun, being understood, as such were baked in hot ashes. (Kretzmann)

17:12 *as the LORD your God lives.* Her oath in the name of the Lord was either an accommodation to Elijah, whom she recognized as an Israelite, or a genuine expression of previous knowledge of and commitment to the God of Israel. (CSB)

Vow to affirm the truth of her testimony. The widow recognized Elijah as an Israelite, and her expression may indicate frail faith in the true God. Though Zarephath lay outside of Israel, Israelite beliefs had influenced its people. Sidonians typically worshiped Eshmun and participated in the regional fertility cults. (TLSB)

handful of flour in a jar – The word *cad* is to be understood as implying an earthen jar; not a wooden vessel, or barrel of any kind. In the East they preserve their corn and meal in such vessels; without which precaution the insects would destroy them. Travelers in Asiatic countries abound with observations of this kind. (AC)

die. Drought was not restricted to Israelite territory, as the Phoenician historian Menander attests. (TLSB)

17:13 *first make a small cake of bread for me ... then make something for yourself and your son.* As a prophet, Elijah's words are the command of the Lord. The widow is asked to give all she has to sustain the bearer of the word of God. The demand to give her all is in essence the demand of the covenant that Israel had broken. (CSB)

To the word of comfort was added a demand, which must have been a sore test for the woman's faith. (Kretzmann)

17:14 *thus says the Lord.* Elijah can tell the widow “Don't be afraid” (v. 13) because the demand of the covenant is not given without the promise of the covenant. The Lord does not ask more than he promises to give. (CSB)

17:15 *did as Elijah said.* By an act of faith the woman received the promised blessing. Israel had forsaken the covenant and followed Baal and Asherah in search of prosperity. Now in the midst of a pagan kingdom a widow realized that trustful obedience to the word of God is the way that leads to life. (CSB)

In spite of her poverty the widow of Zarephath brought a cake of bread to God's prophet. In spite of her poverty the widow in Mark 12:42 brought to the Lord two mites, all that she had. Poverty does not

excuse any Christian from worshiping the Lord. The offerings of Christians, rich and poor, are a demonstration of their love and trust. (PBC)

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

17:16 *jar of flour was not spent.* God miraculously provided for this non-Israelite who, in an act of faith in the Lord’s word, had laid her life on the line. He gave her “manna” from heaven even while he was withholding food from his unfaithful people in the promised land. The warning of Dt 32:21 was being fulfilled (cf. Ro 10:19; 11:11, 14). (CSB)

At the brook of Cherith, the Lord had sent ravens with food for Elijah; now He miraculously provides sustenance for the widow. In the religious crisis during the days of Elijah and Elisha, more “signs and wonders” witnessed to the power of the true God than in any period since the exodus (Ex. 7:3) (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrew 9:24-28

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, **9** “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” **10** So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” **11** And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” **12** And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” **13** And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. **14** For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.”” **15** And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. **16** The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

17:8-16 Through Elijah, the Lord miraculously provides food for a widow in Zarephath. This story illustrates God’s never-ending goodness. He daily and richly provides for all our needs, blessings us far beyond what we deserve or what we ask. (TLSB)

17:9 *Zarephath of Sidon.* A coastal town located between Tyre and Sidon in the territory ruled by Jezebel’s father Ethbaal (16:31). Elijah is commanded to go and reside in the heart of the very land from which the Baal worship now being promoted in Israel had come. (CSB)

Small coastal town of Phoenicia between Tyre and Sidon. (TLSB)

Zarephath was outside of Israel, near Sidon, the hometown of Queen Jezebel. Would someone from the idolatrous land really provide for a prophet of the Lord? Could a woman (a widow at that) feed another mouth during a famine? (PBC)

widow. Jesus’ only excursion beyond the borders of ancient Israel was “to the region of Tyre and Sidon,” where He, too, met a Syrophenician woman of great faith (Mk 7:24–30). (TLSB)

Elijah, as the bearer of God’s word, was now to be sustained by human hands, but they were the hands of a poor widow facing starvation (v. 12). She was, moreover, from outside the circle of God’s own people

(cf. Lk 4:25–26)—in fact, she was from the pagan nation that at that time (much like Egypt earlier and Babylon later) represented the forces arrayed against God’s kingdom. (CSB)

He had made provisions to take further care of His prophet, and would in due time influence her heart to do His bidding. (Kretzmann)

17:10 *So he arose.* Elijah’s reliance on the Lord demonstrated the faith in the Lord that Israel should have been living by. (CSB)

widow – Jesus refers to the widow of Zarephath in Luke 4:26. There were many widows in Israel who, theoretically, could have provided for Elijah. But God pronounced judgment on His people’s unbelief by sending His prophet to a Gentile woman. When God’s own people worship idols instead of the Lord, then God sends His prophets and His blessings to others. (PBC)

gate...gathering stick – Odd place to gather firewood. “Stalks” could be intended (cf. Josh 2:6), as threshing floors were often near the city gate (cf. 22:10) (TLSB)

Odd place to gather firewood. “Stalks” could be intended (cf. Jsh 2:6), as threshing floors were often near the city gate (cf. 22:10). (TLSB)

Bring me a little water. Test of generosity. Cf. Gn 24:17–20. (TLSB)

17:11 *bring me a morsel of bread* – The smallest-sized loaf, in the form of a cake or bun, being understood, as such were baked in hot ashes. (Kretzmann)

17:12 *as the LORD your God lives.* Her oath in the name of the Lord was either an accommodation to Elijah, whom she recognized as an Israelite, or a genuine expression of previous knowledge of and commitment to the God of Israel. (CSB)

Vow to affirm the truth of her testimony. The widow recognized Elijah as an Israelite, and her expression may indicate frail faith in the true God. Though Zarephath lay outside of Israel, Israelite beliefs had influenced its people. Sidonians typically worshiped Eshmun and participated in the regional fertility cults. (TLSB)

handful of flour in a jar – The word *cad* is to be understood as implying an earthen jar; not a wooden vessel, or barrel of any kind. In the East they preserve their corn and meal in such vessels; without which precaution the insects would destroy them. Travelers in Asiatic countries abound with observations of this kind. (AC)

die. Drought was not restricted to Israelite territory, as the Phoenician historian Menander attests. (TLSB)

17:13 *first make a small cake of bread for me ... then make something for yourself and your son.* As a prophet, Elijah’s words are the command of the Lord. The widow is asked to give all she has to sustain the bearer of the word of God. The demand to give her all is in essence the demand of the covenant that Israel had broken. (CSB)

To the word of comfort was added a demand, which must have been a sore test for the woman’s faith. (Kretzmann)

17:14 *thus says the Lord.* Elijah can tell the widow “Don’t be afraid” (v. 13) because the demand of the covenant is not given without the promise of the covenant. The Lord does not ask more than he promises to give. (CSB)

17:15 *did as Elijah said.* By an act of faith the woman received the promised blessing. Israel had forsaken the covenant and followed Baal and Asherah in search of prosperity. Now in the midst of a pagan kingdom a widow realized that trustful obedience to the word of God is the way that leads to life. (CSB)

In spite of her poverty the widow of Zaraphath brought a cake of bread to God’s prophet. In spite of her poverty the widow in Mark 12:42 brought to the Lord two mites, all that she had. Poverty does not excuse any Christian from worshiping the Lord. The offerings of Christians, rich and poor, are a demonstration of their love and trust. (PBC)

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

17:16 *jar of flour was not spent.* God miraculously provided for this non-Israelite who, in an act of faith in the Lord’s word, had laid her life on the line. He gave her “manna” from heaven even while he was withholding food from his unfaithful people in the promised land. The warning of Dt 32:21 was being fulfilled (cf. Ro 10:19; 11:11, 14). (CSB)

At the brook of Cherith, the Lord had sent ravens with food for Elijah; now He miraculously provides sustenance for the widow. In the religious crisis during the days of Elijah and Elisha, more “signs and wonders” witnessed to the power of the true God than in any period since the exodus (Ex. 7:3) (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 12:38-44

38 **And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”**

12:38-40 Jesus warns against using self-serving religion to elevate ourselves above others. Clergy especially need to listen to Jesus at this point. Jesus shows all religious leaders and scholars the model for their leadership: humility, service, for His sacrifice has atoned for us all. (TLSB)

Besides the direct parallel of Lk 20:45–47, Jesus’ words here recall Mt 6:1–8 and 23:1–7. The latter is probably in fact the more complete reporting of this same short discourse in Mark on the scribes (and, in Matthew, the Pharisees). Especially interesting, though, is a comparison with the former (Mt 6:1–8), which introduces the Lord’s Prayer. There the hypocrisies include giving to the poor to be seen by men; here in Mark, the indictment includes devouring the small means of the poor (“widows’ houses”). Both connect closely to the following story of the widow’s mite—the hypocritical giving of Matthew 6 and the mention of widows here in Mark 12—and both are condemned with “Beware!” Could it be that some of the conspicuous contributions of the rich (v 41) were ill-gotten gains at the expense of poor widows just like this one? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

12:38-39 “And in his teaching.” Jesus is always the teacher, the rabbi. Previously he had taught a large number of people, who heard him gladly. Here he begins to teach again (“and”). Jesus’ teaching is a contrast to that of the scribes, the “official” Jewish teachers of the law. The first word he speaks is against them: “beware” (in Greek, *blepete*). This is a serious warning against the scribes, because they are not what people think they are. The long robes, the public greetings, the best seats in the synagogue and at

feasts are but a deception. Beware, lest you think they are what they pretend to be. Be on guard! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

12:38 *flowing robes*. The teachers of the law wore long, white linen robes that were fringed and almost reached to the ground. (CSB)

Mark of distinction, perhaps associated with holiness. (TLSB)

Mark gives only a very short section of the last woe of Jesus upon the scribes and Pharisees, but a passage which exhibits very well the hollowness and the mockery of their hypocrisy. Jesus warns the people against the scribes and their hypocritical ways. They should look, they should watch out for them. And now He characterizes them properly, He shows up their sham and deceit. Their desire, their one supreme wish is to wear garments which called men's attention to them; they take a childish pleasure in bedecking themselves. Long robes they affected, like persons of great distinction, with exceptionally large tassels trailing along the ground. In these they loved to walk about, with no other object than to attract the attention of the multitude. (Kretzmann)

The scribe was distinguished by his linen robe, a long white mantle reaching to the feet and provided with a long fringe. White line clothes were regarded as a mark of distinction, so that men of eminence (priests, Levites, scribes), or those who wished to parade their position, wore white and left bright colors to the common people. By the majority of the people the scribes were considered to possess sovereign authority. When a scribe passed by on the street or in the bazaar people rose respectfully. Only tradesmen as their work were exempted from this display of deference. (Lane)

like greeting in the marketplaces – Titles of honor and respect (e.g. Rabbi, Father, Teacher). (TLSB)

They also loved to be greeted in the market-place; they liked the salutation Master; it gratified their vanity and their self-importance. (Kretzmann)

The scribe was greeted with titles of deepest respect and there is evidence that in the first century A.D. the designation “Rabbi” was undergoing a transition from its former status as a general title of honor to one reserved exclusively for ordained scribes. (Lane)

12:39 *best seats in the synagogues*. A reference to the bench in front of the “ark” that contained the sacred scrolls. Those who sat there could be seen by all the worshipers in the synagogue. (CSB)

The place at the front of the synagogue or nearest the host at a banquet. (TLSB)

They also loved to be greeted in the market-place; they liked the salutation Master; it gratified their vanity and their self-importance. (Kretzmann)

In the synagogues the seat of honor was reserved for the scribe; he sat at the front with his back to the chest containing the Torah, in full view of the congregation. (Lane)

places of honor at feasts – When important men of Jerusalem gave a feast they considered it an ornament to the feast to have a distinguished scribe and his pupils there. The highest places were assigned to them, and scribe was given precedence in honor over the aged, and even over parents. (Lane)

When they were invited to dinner, they did not wait to be placed by the host, but chose the sofa of the honored guest, often usurping the place of guests more honorable than they. And to this vanity was added selfishness and greed. (Kretzmann)

12:40 devour widows' houses. Since the teachers of the law were not paid a regular salary, they were dependent on the generosity of patrons for their livelihood. Such a system was open to abuses, and widows were especially vulnerable to exploitation. (CSB)

With no other source of income, scribes often lived off the generosity of benefactors. Abuses followed. (TLSB)

In the first century A.D. the scribes lived primarily on subsidies, since it was forbidden that they would be paid for exercising their profession. While few scribes were reduced to begging, an abundance of evidence shows that the Jerusalem scribes belonged to the poorer classes. The extension of hospitality to them was strongly encouraged as an act of piety; it was considered particularly meritorious to relieve a scribe of concern for his livelihood. Many well to-do persons placed their financial resources at the disposal of scribes, and it was inevitable that there should be abuses. The charge that the scribes “devoured widows’ houses” refers to the fact that they sponged on the hospitality of people of limited means. (Lane)

Jesus points out how the scribes pray at length and then devour widows’ houses. They steal what is not theirs, and then as a pretense (insincere, make-believe), they make long prayers. It is helpful that the lectionary of *Lutheran Service Book* has added these initial verses (vv 38–40) to the former *Lutheran Worship* pericope, which began with v 41. One can see how this text is developing into a message contrasting deception and sincerity, with the scribes (vv 38–40) showing their deception, and the widow (beginning at v 41) showing her sincerity. We remember that widows at that time were without resources or help of any kind. Shocking, then, that the scribes took their homes by using deceit and treachery. Theirs is the greater condemnation, because of the multiple sins of theft, pride, and hypocrisy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

By promising prayers to widows, and then pompously delivering such intercessions for their welfare, they obtained money. For these prayers, purposely long and pompous, were only a blind to hide their real aim, namely, that of getting money, thus devouring the property, the houses, of the widows. This special form of avarice seems to be rampant in many parts of Christendom to this very hour, for the masses for the dead in the Roman Church certainly come under this heading, and the many prayers in the various cults are not one whit better. Christ’s judgment upon them all is short and severe: They will receive the greater damnation. Their hypocrisy is open before the eyes of the Judge and will receive the punishment commensurate with its damnableness. (Kretzmann)

long prayers – Prayers offered to impress listeners, long in duration and short on faith. (TLSB)

receive greater condemnation – With greater knowledge comes greater responsibility and accountability (cf Lk 12:47-48; James 3:1). Luther states, “In spiritual gifts we far surpass others; but because we acknowledge these as gifts of God, not our own, granted to us for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:12), we do not become proud on their account. For we know that more is required of him of whom much is given than of him to whom little is given (Luke 12:48). In addition, we know that ‘God shows no partiality (Rom 2:11). Therefore a faithful sexton is no less pleasing to God with his gift than is a preacher of the Word, for he serves God in the same faith and spirit. And so we should not honor the lowest Christian any less than they honor us. In this way we remain free of the poison of vainglory and walk by the Spirit.” (AE 27:103) (TLSB)

12:38–40 Jesus warns against using self-serving religion to elevate ourselves above others. Clergy especially need to listen to Jesus at this point. Jesus shows all religious leaders and scholars the model for their leadership: humility, service, and sacrifice, for His sacrifice has atoned for us all. • Lord, grant us humble hearts and willing spirits to fulfill our callings faithfully. Amen. (TLSB)

The Widow's Offering

41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 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 offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

12:41-44 Jesus uses the sacrifice of a widow to illustrate for His disciples the character of absolute dependence on God. Wealth and possession can pose a spiritual threat – wealth has a way of owning its possessor. Jesus' love and sacrifice motivate us to offer our whole lives to Him as our daily offering of gratitude. He gave up everything, including His life, on the cross for us. (TLSB)

This little account, found only in Mark and Luke, is like a breath of fresh air in an environment which was hostile to Jesus. Look at Luke 21:1-4, a briefer version of the same incident. It happened on Tuesday of holy week. Fahling and Ylvisaker place John 12:20-50, which contains the account of the Greeks, after this incident. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: The poor (this widow) and the strangers (the Greeks) shall be His portion. The contemplation of this truth shall strengthen Him in His suffering which is now at hand. Jesus has spent the day thus far in the court of the Gentiles. Now He proceeds to the women's court, one of the lesser courts within that of the Gentiles. Here were placed thirteen chests or boxes, the so-called temple treasure. These receptacles had apertures in the form of trumpets. In these chests gifts of charity were deposited for the temple and the temple worship. (Buls)

Fahling: After the great denunciation just related (Matthew 23:1-39; Mark 12:38-40) it is only too clear that the rupture of Jesus with the leaders of Israel was final. But before Jesus took His last leave of the Temple, and while He sat down for a moment to rest His sad heart, an incident occurred which made it possible for Him to leave His Father's house with words of kindness and approval. (Buls)

Lenski: What a man! Directly after an address like the one just uttered he calmly sits down to note what a poor, lone widow does. He is never one-sided, never carried away by his emotions, always absolutely master of himself. (Buls)

Hendriksen: The same loving Savior, who has just now denounced the scribes for 'devouring widows' houses'(12:40), shows, by his own example, how widows should really be treated. One should help them, and, as here, praise them whenever such praise is in order. (Buls)

These were Jesus' last moments in the temple – He spent them reading the hearts of the worshipers. (PBC)

12:41 *the temple treasury*. Located in the court of the women. Both men and women were allowed in this court, but women could go no farther into the temple buildings. It contained 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles for contributions brought by worshipers. (CSB)

RSV, JB, NEB and NKJV place Jesus "opposite the treasure." "Crowd" is the public in general. "Money" denotes copper, brass or bronze money. It is implied that the general public did not give gifts of gold. The Jews did not use paper money. (Buls)

The second sentence of this verse is more limited than is the first. It speaks only of the wealthy. "Many wealthy people were depositing much money." Bengel remarks at this point that the state was prosperous. Evidently Jesus sat where He could watch everything for quite some time. (Buls)

In his commentary on Luke, L. T. Johnson states that the temple treasury served as a repository for gifts that would be distributed to the poor. "The devout used to put their gifts in secret," later to be distributed also "in secret" (L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991], 315; cited in Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997], 780, note 11), but in our text the giving by the rich was all quite conspicuous. What Jesus observed while watching this process is the subject of his teaching, as he speaks of the obvious contrast between the rich and the poor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

"offering box." Thirteen receptacles were located around the temple courtyard. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Jesus, being weary of His labors of teaching and arguing all day, sat down near these collection boxes, or repositories, the money of each of which was designated for special purposes, and carefully watched the multitude as they cast money into the Temple treasury. (Kretzmann)

many rich people – Jesus did not say their gifts were not welcome or not needed. What He did want His disciples and us to note is that our gifts are acceptable only if they come from hearts filled with love and trust. (PBC)

The evangelist states that many rich people, perhaps some of the merchants that came to Jerusalem only for the great festivals, threw in much. A few pieces of gold more or less made very little difference to them. It gave them the satisfied feeling of having done their duty when they dropped their superfluous money into the box. (Kretzmann)

12:42 *poor widow* - The poor widow (*chēra*, which means deficient, i.e., of a husband) also joined the line of those giving gifts. Her gift was two small copper coins. While this seems to be an insignificant gift, the contrast between her and the rich who gave large sums of money could not be greater. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Again, like the previous verse, we have a complex sentence, beginning with an adverbial temporal clause and ending with an adjectival clause. The "copper coins" were the smallest coin they had. The two coins amounted to about one half cent. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Due to constantly varying monetary values it is impossible to indicate with any degree of accuracy what such coins would be worth today. . . By human calculation what the widow gave was insignificant. (Buls)

very small copper coins. The smallest coins then in circulation in Palestine. Though her offering was meager, the widow brought “all she had” (v. 44; see note on 2Co 8:12). (CSB)

lepta duo, ho estin kodrantēs, “two small copper coins, which make a penny.” The coins, *lepta*, totaled one sixty-fourth of a denarius. Thus a laborer would earn sixty-four of these in a day; the widow’s offering could be earned in just ten to twelve minutes of very ordinary work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

But suddenly a woman attracted the interest of the Lord. A poor widow she was, that probably had to support herself as best she could. Two mites she had in her possession, and, though she might have kept at least one of them, she threw them both into the treasury. “Another coin, translated ‘mite,’ is in Greek *lepton*, ‘the small one, ‘Or the ‘bit’ It was two of these that the widow cast into the treasury, where it is said that two of them equaled a *quadrans*. The ‘mite’ was, then, of the value of 1/8 of a cent. It was doubtless the smallest coin in circulation, but it has not yet been identified with certainty with any coin that archeology has discovered. (Kretzmann)

We have no equivalent in our currency. The copper coin was called a lepton, meaning “small, thin, light.” The two were worth one half a kodrantes. This in turn was worth one sixty-fourth of a denarius, the daily wage of a laborer in those days. (PBC)

For the benefit of his Roman readers Mark computes their value in terms of Roma coinage. The fact that the woman gave two coins was significant, for she could easily have kept one for herself. (Lane)

12:43 *widow has put in more* – Unlike the rich, who had more than enough left, over, she gave all she had. This was an act of worship, of love, of faith and of absolute trust. (PBC)

Evidently the disciples were not sitting with Jesus at the moment, for we are told that He called them to Himself. Furthermore, the text seems to indicate that the disciples did not actually see the woman make her contribution. And we are not told that Jesus told them how much she threw into the treasury. If He did not tell them, they must have gathered that it was a small amount. The words “I tell you the truth” are used only of Jesus. They indicate His divinity. (Buls)

“More” does not denote amount but quality. This one widow is singled out as the highest giver. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: In His last days of public teaching in the temple there was much that offended the Lord, causing Him to rebuke the people and their leaders, but He also observed that which was good, even though it seemed insignificant. (Buls)

In verse 42 it was mentioned that she gave *two* mites. Why two?

Bengel: One of which the widow might have retained. (Buls)

The point is that she was utterly selfless. How did Jesus know that she was poor? Perhaps by her dress. How did He know that she was a widow? Because of His omniscience. The same can be applied in verse 44 where we are told that the contribution was her entire living. The wealthy threw in much. There is nothing wrong with that. The widow threw in two mites. There is nothing meritorious about that. The explanation follows in the last verse. (Buls)

Now Jesus begins to teach his disciples about the use of money, and perhaps offers a wider teaching on our possessions and how we use them. He begins this teaching with the two words “Truly, I say.” The

Greek words *amēn legōn* are frequently used by Jesus at the start of an important saying. Jesus' hearers must have been startled to hear that the widow's offering was greater than all the offerings given by all the people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The rabbinic literature contains a similar account: a priest rejected the offering of a handful of meal from a poor woman. That night in a dream he was commanded: "Do not despise her. It is as if she had offered her life." This account, like the evangelical narrative, serves to stress the qualitative difference between God's perspective and man's: "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). (Lane)

There was a lesson for the disciples in this act of the poor widow, and therefore Jesus called them over quickly and pointed out the greatness of the sacrifice. In proportion, she had given more than all the rest that had cast money into the treasury. For, though many of them may have given money equal to thousands of dollars, it was all given from their surplus; these amounts they would never miss; theirs was no sacrifice in any sense. But how different the gift of the widow! She had, out of the depth of her want, in her destitute state, given all that she possessed, her whole means of living; she had sacrificed the last necessities of life to the Lord, and apparently out of a heart filled with free love for the God of Israel, since Jesus in no way censures her manner of giving. That is, in truth, cheerful giving, and such gives the Lord loveth. A special warning is in place here, since many people try to excuse their infinitesimal gifts for the Lord with a reference to the widow's mite. If cases like hers would actually happen in our days, the treasuries of the Church would be filled to the bursting point, so that the disposal of the money would become a real problem. Let the Christians of the present time learn to be only one tenth as liberal and sacrificing in their gifts to the Lord as this poor widow, and there would never be need of any more cries for help. (Kretzmann)

12:44 OUT OF THEIR WEALTH – This verse is the explanation. Note the contrasts. "Out of their wealth" means "from that which they didn't need anyway." "From her poverty" means "from her destitution." "To live on" means "living, livelihood, the means by which life is sustained." We quote several translation to bring out the meaning: (Buls)

- AAT: All the others took some of what they had left over and dropped it in, but she put in what she needed herself, all she had -- all she had to live on. (Buls)
- NEB: Those others who have given had more than enough, but she, with less than enough, has given all that she had to live on. (Buls)
- JB: They have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on. (Buls)
- TEV: The others put in what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, put in all she had -- she gave all she had to live on. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: The poor widow proves to the Lord that not all have been beguiled by the corrupt leaders who devoured the houses of widows, that not all were imbued with the same carnal mind -- there are yet a few who are willing in the fervor of their devotion to the holy place of God to sacrifice all. (Buls)

Lenski: Poverty may be made a great curse as well as a great blessing. It becomes a curse when it fills the heart with anxious care and worry, with murmuring and complaint, or leads to unbelief and dishonesty. It becomes a blessing when it compels the poor man to cast himself upon God who has promised to care for his children.(Buls)

By analogy we might say that wealth may be a curse as well as a blessing. If the wealthy man becomes a miser who hoards and gives only that which he won't miss anyway, his wealth becomes a curse. But if the wealthy man gives his all back to the Lord, then it is a blessing. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: The Lord was greatly pleased with this sacrifice of the widow because it showed that it was given out of the right motive in deep love and trust to God. These willing and cheerful givers are loved by God. (Buls)

Lenski: To give her last cent as she did means that by this act she placed herself completely into the keeping of God, who could and would provide for her far better and more surely than any two 'mites,' or a million times any number of 'mites.' (Buls)

The rich in this case gave from a lack of faith. She gave by faith. What did she eat that evening? The Lord took care of that. (Buls)

put in everything – holon ton bion autēs, literally, “all her life.” The widow now literally did not know where her next meal was coming from. It is significant to note that neither Mark nor Luke tells us how she made out; both narratives immediately move on with no further mention of the woman. If the accounts had given us an earthly “happy ending,” such as Jesus and the disciples providing for her henceforth, we might miss the point of the story. The woman did not give because she knew she would have a next meal; she gave in faith that God would take care of her even if she starved to death. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Jesus points out that the amount one has after his or her contribution has been made is an important teaching. The rich gave much, but had much left over. The widow gave a small amount, and is left with nothing. She gave, out of her poverty, “all she had to live on.” Like the widow at Zarephath in the Old Testament Reading, this New Testament widow trusted in the Lord and his Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The widow kept nothing for herself (cf 10:21; Rm 12:1–2). (TLSB)

12:41–44 Jesus uses the sacrifice of a widow to illustrate for His disciples the character of absolute dependence on God. Wealth and possession can pose a spiritual threat—wealth has a way of owning its possessor. Jesus’ love and sacrifice motivate us to offer our whole lives to Him as our daily offering of gratitude. He gave up everything, including His life, on the cross for us. • “Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee; Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise.” Amen. (LSB 783:1) (TLSB)