

# God's Generosity

By Linda Rex

**November 10, 2024, Proper 27 / After Pentecost**—One of the stories from the gospels that warms my heart when it comes to generosity, is where Jesus points out a poor widow who was dropping her last coins into the temple treasury. In comparison to the rich people who were putting large sums into the treasury, Jesus said that this woman “*put in all she owned, all she had to live on*” (Mark 12:38–44 NASB).

When we look more closely at what Jesus was saying in this passage, we realize that he was trying to help those gathered around him to see who he really was. Here, in their midst, stood the One who was at that moment, investing all of heaven's resources in his human existence, for the sake of the kingdom of God and for all of us, the spiritually poor. Standing there, Jesus was the Son of God in human flesh, fully at the mercy of human beings, who would soon betray him and condemn him and crucify him. This widow woman, who laid down her life by giving her last cent to the treasury, was a living parable to the Suffering Servant Messiah, who was in the process of giving everything up by laying down his life on behalf of all.

The New Testament passage for this Sunday, Hebrews 9:24–28, reminds us that Jesus Christ did not enter a humanly constructed holy place, but into heaven itself, to appear before God on our behalf. Jesus did not offer any animal sacrifices on our behalf, but offered his own blood to be shed for our sakes. Because of who he is and was as the Son of God in human flesh, who lived, died, and rose again, Jesus' one-time self-offering was sufficient for all time. Unlike our human efforts to make ourselves right with God, which need to constantly be repeated, Jesus offered himself just once, and it was sufficient because of who he is and was. In this offering of himself for us, in our place, Jesus put away sin once and for all. How wonderful is that!

But how does this impact our everyday life and the difficulties we face day by day? We are much like the poor widow or the rich people in the temple, going about our business, trying to do the right thing when we get a chance. First, I'd like to note the reality that even though this poor widow was ignored by the powers-that-be, she was noticed by the One who really matters—Jesus. God was not unaware of her circumstance, nor did he reject her feeble efforts to serve and to do the right thing before him.

Humble service and giving may not be noticed or given much attention by the world around us. Often, people's attention is captured by the generosity of those who are able to make a big splash by pouring large sums into their favorite charity. Giving away large amounts of money isn't a bad thing. When rich people use their money for the benefit of those who don't have as much, they are actually following God's instructions (1 Tim 6:18). But they are to do it in a way that reflects the character and nature of God as demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ, who—“though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). In other words, the attitude of humility in generous giving, and an effort to lift up those who are poverty-stricken and unable to help themselves, is what best reflects our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this passage in Hebrews, the author uses the word “now” two times. The first “now” has to do with where Jesus is presently—in the presence of his Father in the Spirit, standing in our place and acting on our behalf. Jesus is hidden from our human view at present, but is actively at work, intervening and interceding constantly for us. He is aware of our circumstances, our challenges, and our need, and is constantly seeking our best in each situation. As we come to him in faith, we begin to recognize and experience the reality of our participation in his life with his Father in the Spirit.

The other “now” has to do with the already-not-yet of God’s kingdom, inaugurated at the culmination of the ages when the Son of God entered our sphere in the person of Jesus Christ, and offered himself in our place on our behalf. We live in the midst of this “now” of Jesus’ high priestly ministry on our behalf, and look forward to the day when he will return in glory to establish the new heaven and earth. We can anticipate this day with eagerness and joy because Jesus took care of all our sin, removing it once and for all when he laid down his life for us. This means that the judgment which follows death is meant for our restoration and renewal, not for our destruction. What Jesus is bringing when he returns is our salvation. This gives us great hope. And it is in this Spirit of hope that we quietly, yet generously give to others in humble gratitude for all God has given to us in his Son Jesus.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your generosity towards us in giving us your Son and your Spirit. Thank you, Jesus, for giving your all for our sake, that we may be included in your life with your Father in the Spirit now and forever. Grant us the grace to be humbly generous with others as you have been with us. Amen.*

*“For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”* Hebrews 9:24–28 NASB

*“In His teaching He was saying: ‘Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.’ He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.’ ”* Mark 12:38–44 NASB