

“And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. “ Mark 12:42 (RSV)

Sermon:

EQUALITY FOR THE POOR

By Louis Hudson, III

Though often ignored by Christians, who have grown comfortable with a culture which seeks to deny the stinging issues of poverty and classism, the gospel portrayed Jesus as being aware and concerned about class consciousness. Perceivably, the writer of Mark’s gospel understood some of the tension, which existed between the rich, and the poor of Jesus’ community. The Greco-Roman world consisted of many social and religious groups and evidenced a disturbing pecking order with respect to socio-economic status. It was a society in which respect and attention for the rich were demanded, and women, especially widowed ones, with limited resources, were easily overlooked.

Today, so much of what’s noticed and praised in our modern world reflects only the lives of the rich and powerful. In our fame-seeking world, it is not surprising that television programs like *Ebony Jet* showcase features popular entertainers as the persons deserving attention and recognition. They are jet setters, credited with being the individuals who make things happen. The *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* show the glories of people who seem to have it all. They are pacesetters, viewed as the “shakers and movers” of our modern world. The lives and names of jet setters and pacesetters fill the annuals of ancient and modern history. To be sure, secular history and the news media imply that our society is framed and focused on the “haves”, while the struggles of the “have-nots” go unnoticed and unappreciated.

However, in Mark 12:42 a certain poor person became the focus of Jesus’ attention. Consequently, a different message was proclaimed—one which denounced the pomp and pride of the prosperous and emphasized the precious gift and piety of the poor. The message of Jesus assured that the toils, trials, and tithes of a poor widow do count.

What a liberating word for our times. The unchanging message of the gospel to the hungry masses still headlines with the mission of the Christ: Luke 4:18-20 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (NIV) What is good news if not the reassuring message that the poor have received recognition and equality? Solidarity with the poor is the liberating proclamation of Jesus. Jesus, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, (Phil 2:5f) gave His all identifying with the least, seeking the lost, lifting up the lowly, commanded us to proclaim the good news to the poor.

Let us Pray: *OH LORD, THOU WHO REGARDED THE WAGES OF A WIDOW AS PLEASING AND ACCEPTABLE; GRANT THAT WE IN CHRIST OUR ALL, GRANDE AND GRIT, MAY FAITHFULLY GIVE. Amen*