

A Widow Bit O' Love

Appreciating Our True Value

May 14, 2023

Today we're worshipping our *Father*, honoring our *mothers*, and scrutinizing our *everlasting value*.



There are *many* examples of *godly* women in the Bible, but one of the sweetest, is the *little* story of **the little widow with her equally little – yet highly valuable – offering**. And she's *perfect* for Mother's Day because **she gives everything she's got!** We just got back from Disneyland with our *son*, his *wife*, and *their* four *sons* (2, 4, 6, and 8). Disneyland is such a *microcosm* of *life*: where you share your kid's *joys* and *thrills* and *absolute misery*! And talk about a place where *mom*s give *everything* they've *got*!

I bought this coat 30 years ago, and I only wear it to Disneyland. And our hotel had these waffle makers and little sealed packets of butter; so I put a handful in my pocket and promptly forgot. Now I don't know why I find this so funny, but they make you empty your pockets at Disneyland's security check. So I reach in my pocket and think, "What's this?" And I pull out a fistful of butters. And I have to lay 'em on the table for *inspection*. And the guard looks at 'em. And looks up at me. And the *only thing* he says, is: "That's a lot of butter."

Which brings me to the question: **Ever ironed money?** I've told you before that I have, on occasion, *ironed* my *money*. It may sound a bit *crazy* or C.D.O. (that's O.C.D. but I like to alphabetize it); but *why's* it sound crazy? Mostly, I suppose, cuz **it has no bearing on its value**.

If I take a *fifty* and *crush* it and *trample* it, what's it *worth*? \$50. What if I *defile* President *Grant*? A *scar*, *eyepatch*, *tattoo*, *eyelashes*, little *Hitler-mustache* ... *well* Mr. Grant may not be *amused*; but be that as it *may*, what's he *now* worth? The *same*! Cuz **a defiled dollar retains all of its undefiled value**. As do you. Know why? Cuz **our condition doesn't determine our value**. So, **how do you determine your value?** What's your *gauge*? **Bank account? Intellect? Authority? Popularity? Appearance? Profession? Approval?** Because, **each of these is an identity crisis just waiting to happen!**

And yet, crisp bills are great for *birthday cards*, *vending machines*, and of course ... *dollar origami*. Which is a *thing*. And *businesses* in parts of *Asia* refuse to take heavily used bills because of *germs*. And that was *before* the *pandemic*. Travel sites *recommend ironing*. Not that you're planning on traveling to parts of *Asia*, but none-the-less: *medium heat*, *heavy starch*. Granted, it doesn't affect the value, but there is a *joy* – for those so *inclined* – that comes from taking a *wrinkled bill* and making it *like new* again. However, even at its best, our *paper money* is just a *thin sheet* of *dried pulp* and some *ink*.



But as we all know, **its value comes from something far greater than itself: its maker.** As does *yours*. It's *marked* with a *seal*. As are you. Which is why **your value cannot be reduced by whatever's defiled you** – whether at the hand of others or your own collection of poor choices. Because:



Having *believed*, you were *marked* in [Christ] with a *seal*, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a *deposit* guaranteeing our inheritance until the *redemption* – Ephesians 1:13-14 NIV



[Because] You were *sealed* for the *Day of Redemption*. – Ephesians 4:30 NIV

[And] God's solid foundation *stands firm*, *sealed* with *this* inscription: "The Lord knows those who are *His*" – 2 Timothy 2:19 NIV



For the Lord does not *see* as *man* sees; for *man* looks at the *outward* appearance, but the Lord *looks* at the *heart*." – 1 Samuel 16:7 NKJ



So, do you *get* how much you're worth in *His* eyes? *No*. It's *beyond* us. **Like a toddler trying to comprehend a mother's love.** Like when Jesus said how He longs to *gather* us under His *wings* like a *mother Hen* with her chicks. (Mt 23:37) So **when God was here on earth, what was His worth?** Cuz whatever that was, **He saw it as a great trade for you.** But even *that's* underselling it, because:



God demonstrates His *own love* for *us* in this: while we were *still sinners*, Christ died for *us*. – Romans 5:8-9 NIV



So when it comes to your *self-worth*, **does it vary very much depending on the insecure opinions of others?** *Why?* **Does it rise and fall because of careless comments?** Well, let's not base our *identity* on *fluctuating fears* and *whims*. Jesus' young disciples were *overly concerned* about the *opinions* of the *overtly religious*. But these *self-righteous rulers* were appraising Jesus so as to gain the *praise* of their *fellow self-righteous rulers*. So, Jesus sets His disciples down and sets 'em straight and says:



"You are the *light* of the world. ... let your light *shine* before *others*, so that they may see your good works and *give glory* to your *Father* who is in heaven. ... **[but]** Beware of practicing your *righteousness* before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your *Father* who is in heaven. **[Which includes the glory given to Him because of you]** Thus, *when* you *give* to the needy, [not "if" but "when" in whatever form, because *giving* isn't a *choice*, only the *form*, and our *determination to shine*] *sound no trumpet* before you, as the *hypocrites* do in the *synagogues* and in the *streets*, that they [rather than our Father] may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they [who've robbed our Father of glory] have received their reward." **[Yeah, fleeting, fluctuating, fickle human praise]** – Matthew 5:14-16, 6:1-2 ESV

But seriously? "when you *give* to the needy, *sound no trumpet* before you, as the hypocrites *do*"? They *did*?! "I'm giving to the poor!" [DAH-DAH!] "Check out that poor widow's offering." [WAH-WAH.] Well, **a trumpet isn't always a trumpet. Like when we say: tooting your own horn.**



In Jesus' day, a trumpet-trumpet was called a *shofar*, and **there was no practice of blowing one when giving**. Which is why He doesn't use the word "blow" or "shofar". Instead He said: **don't make trumpet noise** like the hypocrites do, when they give-to-be-seen-and-praised-by-others.

So what kind of trumpet is He referring to? Well, **the Temple treasury had 13 metal offering containers called trumpets** (because of their shape). None survived; but that *photo* is a *representation*. And coins could be *put* in *nice* and *quiet*, or *thrown* in *good* and *loud*. Which means **you could hear a person's heart by the noise they made when giving**. Still can. And this one time:

Jesus sat down [in that part of the temple, with His disciples] opposite the *place* where the offerings were *put* and *watched* the crowd *putting* their money *into* the temple treasury. [NAS says He watched "*how the people put money in*". Why? What's He watching for?] *Many rich people threw in large amounts*. [That's *how* they put *their* money in. But that's *not* what He's watching for] But *a poor widow came* and [Jesus shushed His disciples so they could *hear* what He'd been waiting for: a lesson in *humility, sincerity, fidelity, and trust*. And it came in the form of a poor widow who didn't loudly "throw in" but quietly] *put in two very small copper coins*, [called *lepta*, that they *knew* were] *worth only a fraction of a penny*. [How'd they *know* what she put in? Is He *looming over* her? No. He's *across the courtyard* (about from *me* to the *back wall*). It's by the *noise*] Calling His disciples [close] to *Him*, [so as not to embarrass *her*] Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this *poor widow* has *put more* into the treasury [trumpets] than *all* the others. They all gave [loudly] out of their *wealth*; but *she*, out of her *poverty*, [quietly] *put in everything—all she had to live on*." – Mark 12:41-44 NIV

Cuz the offerings went in part to care for *orphans* and *widows*; and she *gave back* what little she'd saved! Which is why she's *perfect* for Mother's Day. But, **what do you give the woman who's given everything? Appreciation** (like Jesus gave this widow). So moms raise your hand for a Crumbl cookie, with a replica of the widow's lepton sealed inside; it's a *token* of our *appreciation* and a *reminder* that **Jesus is watching when no one else sees that you're giving it your all**.



After that day, the disciples could easily hear the difference between that which was **softly offered** to the Lord, **in the quiet confidence of His stable, sealed, firm-standing love**, from the *brash self-serving noisemakers* bent on robbing our Father Hen of His *glory* and *praise*. Paul says:

If I give *all* I possess to the poor ... but have not *love*, I gain *nothing*. – 1 Corinthians 13:3 NIV

I am only a resounding gong or a *clanging cymbal*. – 1 Corinthians 13:1 NIV

Which coincidentally, is the same sound a *self-seeking offering-tosser* made when *pelting* those Temple treasury trumpets! So Jesus warns His impressionable apprentices to **beware of the toot-your-own-horn tooters** whether they're in the *church*, in the *streets*, or in your *own heart*. Cuz **they only appear to be giving when in fact they're taking**. So don't *throw in* with them. Cuz just after Jesus said that "they have *received* their *reward*", He said:

But when [not “if”] you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing – Matthew 6:3 NIV



Whenever Jesus references the *left hand*, let’s remember the *imagery it held* and the fact that He had a great *sense of humor*! **Cuz the right hand was the clean hand (used when eating, greeting, serving, and giving).** But, being long before *hand sanitizer*, **the left hand did the self-serving dirty work of the unavoidable duties; and therefore took a rear seat to the right.** And so, He’s simply, humorously, saying to **ban your self-serving hand from soiling your giving hand.** Because **any amount of self-serving spoils the offering.** So, keep that shallow, short-term significance grabber in the dark.

Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. – James 4:8 NIV

... so that your giving may be in secret. [Not from others; they should see your good works and glorify your Father; but from your own underhanded pride] Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. – Matthew 6:4 NIV

For the Lord *himself* will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God – 1 Thessalonians 4:16 NIV



Now *that’s* the trumpet to trump *all* trumpets! And *that’s* when our Great Shepherd King says to the sheep on *His right hand*, “Come, you who are blessed, take your inheritance; cuz whatever you did for the *least* (with a *right heart*), you did for Me.” And those ol’ *goats* on *His left*, get *left*. (Mt 25:31-41)



[Because] He will bring to *light* what is *hidden* in *darkness* and will *expose* the *motives* of the *heart*. [And] At that time each will receive their praise from God. – 1 Corinthians 4:5 NIV



So, **how would it feel to have God praise you?!** Well, if those *sheep* on *His right* are any *indication*, it’s *confusing*. “Us? Why? When?” Cuz **we just don’t see ourselves through the eyes of our Father Hen.** Plus, a lot of the overtly religious really *fowl* it up. And, He *presents* us without *spot* or *wrinkle*, (Eph 5:27) which *sounds* like there’s an *iron* involved ... as in “*iron sharpens iron*”.

But **none of this will raise our value, just our appreciation.** Cuz you know, Jesus gets a *heavenly joy* in making the *crushed* and *care-worn*, *crisp* and *clean*, exactly like *renewing* a crumpled *Bill* ... or *Jill*, or *Sue*, or *you*. So take it from *me*, Mr. *Wersen*, when you’re *sealed* in *Jesus’ name*, no matter how *low* you may *incorrectly appraise* your sense of self-worth, **your eternal redemption value cannot lessen or worsen**, even if your name’s *Wersen*! Which is the *lesson* of *Wersen*.

But on the *flip side*, **our value isn’t increased by the wrinkles we work out.** And yet, there *is* a *God-given joy* in *ironing out* the *mess* we’ve made of ourselves *thus far*. And *rightly* so. So just keep in *mind* that it, *thankfully*, has *no bearing* on your *truest, deepest, eternal value*.

And let’s *calm* and *quiet* our *soul*, as David says, “like a weaned child with its mother.” (Ps 131:2)

Temple Offering Trumpets

The Temple: Its Ministry and Services

by Alfred Edersheim (1825–1889), Jewish convert to Christianity and Biblical scholar.

Chapter 2

WITHIN THE HOLY PLACE – THE COURT OF THE WOMEN

The Court of the Women obtained its name, not from its appropriation to the exclusive use of women, but because they were not allowed to proceed farther, except for sacrificial purposes. Indeed, this was probably the common place for worship, the females occupying, according to Jewish tradition, only a raised gallery along three sides of the court. This court covered a space upwards of 200 feet square.

All around ran a simple colonnade, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions were placed. These thirteen chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, shaped like trumpets, whence their name. Their specific objects were carefully marked on them. Nine were for the receipt of what was legally due by worshippers; the other four for strictly voluntary gifts. Trumpets I and II were appropriated to the half-shekel Temple-tribute of the current and of the past year. Into Trumpet III those women who had to bring turtledoves for a burnt- and a sin-offering dropped their equivalent in money, which was daily taken out and a corresponding number of turtledoves offered. This not only saved the labor of so many separate sacrifices, but spared the modesty of those who might not wish to have the occasion or the circumstances of their offering to be publicly known.

Into this trumpet Mary the mother of Jesus must have dropped the value of her offering (Luke 2:22,24) when the aged Simeon took the infant Savior 'in his arms, and blessed God.' Trumpet IV similarly received the value of the offerings of young pigeons. In Trumpet V contributions for the wood used in the Temple; in Trumpet VI for the incense, and in Trumpet VII for the golden vessels for the ministry were deposited. If a man had put aside a certain sum for a sin-offering, and any money was left over after its purchase, it was cast into Trumpet VIII. Similarly, Trumpets IX, X, XI, XII, and XIII were destined for what was left over from trespass-offerings, offerings of birds, the offering of the Nazarite, of the cleansed leper, and voluntary offerings.

In all probability this space where the thirteen Trumpets were placed was the 'treasury,' where Jesus taught on that memorable Feast of Tabernacles (John 7 and 8; see specially 8:20). We can also understand how, from the peculiar and known destination of each of these thirteen 'trumpets,' the Lord could distinguish the contributions of the rich who cast in 'of their abundance' from that of the poor widow who of her 'penury' had given 'all the living' that she had (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:1).

It is probably in ironical allusion to the form and name of these treasure-chests that the Lord, making use of the word 'trumpet,' describes the conduct of those who, in their almsgiving, sought glory from men as 'sounding a trumpet' before them (Matthew 6:2).