

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### WIDOW'S MITE: LESSON TWO

by Sandy Harber

**"... and many that were rich cast in much." Mark 12:41b**

**"And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury." Luke 21:1**

Jesus watched as wealthy people cast their tithes and offerings into the Temple Treasury. He noted that many of them gave abundantly ("much"). Early in His ministry, Jesus had delivered the "Sermon on the Mount," which included teachings on various subjects including giving. Jesus had warned people to be careful of their motivation in their charitable giving (Mt. 6:1-4).

Giving is an act of worship. How much a person gives is a private matter between the worshipper and his/her God. Tithing is an opportunity for obedience. But giving above what the law prescribes is an opportunity to show God his/her devotion.

However, the wealthy were using their "gifts" as an opportunity to receive recognition and praise from their fellow man (Mt. 6:2). Jesus counseled people to give in secret, unlike the hypocrites who "sound a trumpet" when they present their gift. "Sounding the trumpet" is interpreted by most Bible scholars to mean that the rich make a big production of casting their gifts into the treasury to ensure that everyone notices their generosity. Another interpretation, however, is that Jesus was referring to those instances when a worshipper would literally pick up the trumpet-shaped chest and carry it before him into the special treasure-chamber where the contents were deposited. In contrast, there was also a "chamber of the silent" where a worshipper could deposit money in secret.

Jesus called people who displayed their giving to the public at large "hypocrites" (Mt. 6:2). The Greek word translated "hypocrite" is a theatrical term which means "to speak from under the mask." It refers to a stage actor, someone who is playing a part.

These hypocrites who created a sensation with their manner of giving received an immediate reward: the admiration of the people present. Those witnesses would have no doubt spread the story abroad. So that everywhere they went they were recognized and respected by the people. This was the recognition they craved. As Jesus said, "they have their reward" (Mt. 6:2).

Jesus taught that it would be better to give in secret so that only God knows the extent of their generosity. And God would reward the gift giver Himself (Mt. 6:4). This type of person would be laying up for himself treasure in heaven (Mt.6:20).

Paul counseled each Christian to "purpose in his heart" what he should give (II Cor. 9:7). That is, decide for yourself how much you want to give to God's work. Don't give out of a sense of duty or because you feel you have to. God loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7). Giving should be a natural outcome of thanksgiving and gratitude for God's bounty. Are we not happy to be able to return a portion of what God has blessed us with? Remember, giving is a form of worship.

*"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." II Corinthians 9:6*