

# transforming generosity

## Unexpected Messengers of Jesus

11 NOVEMBER 2018

BY CATHY CLEMENT



My job was to ask grown-ups for money to support kids. Abused and neglected kids, to be exact, who had been removed from their homes and who were now in “the system.” It was a secular institution, but I considered it ministry.

What I didn’t expect was to meet a boy — a regular kid — who said he wanted the children who were invited to his birthday party to bring gifts for my kids instead. Or the little girl who brought me her piggy bank.

Our reading (Mark 12:38-44) is the familiar Widow’s Mite story. How is it that the smallest gift recorded in the Bible is the most famous? Here Jesus is, 48 hours before his crucifixion, and he decides to sit in the court of the women to watch people make their gifts. As usual, Jesus sides with the marginalized and takes a seat not with the rich and powerful but with the “less than.” And hours before his death he draws our attention to giving.

An aside: Sixteen of Jesus’ 38 parables have to do with money. One in 10 verses in the Bible involves money. Two thousand verses touch upon money, compared to 500 that have to do with prayer and 500 with faith.

Back to the story. Widows have always been the most vulnerable to poverty, and so the Bible takes particular care to provide for them — to keep them connected to their husband’s family (v. 19); to protect them from predatory clergy (v. 40), and not to be neglected but to be visited and honored.

So, after Jesus reminds us of these provisions, he takes a seat and watches. The widow puts in “two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.’”

What would Jesus say to us? Well, I think I’ve already heard him when a young boy gave away his birthday presents and when a little girl brought me her piggy bank. In seeking to know what Jesus would say I just have to pay better attention to the acts of generosity around me that are THE WORD OF THE LORD I too often fail to hear.

*Cathy Clement is the retired Director of Philanthropy at Five Acres, a child-abuse prevention, treatment and education center in Altadena, California. She is a member of All Saints Church, Pasadena, and the president of the TENS board of directors.*

### For reflection ...

- ❖ What acts of generosity in your life came from unexpected sources?
- ❖ How have they called you to your own acts of unexpected generosity?