

Jesus had different eyes. He saw things differently. He still does.

Jesus was in the Temple that day, teaching, as he was given to do. And later he sat down across from the Temple treasury...where people from all over Israel came to fulfill their obligation, making their gifts to the Temple. It was a curious situation, the way that they had arranged for the offering to be received. You dropped your coins—remember there was no paper money—you dropped your coins in a metal funnel that made its way down into a secure money box. So, people queued up to drop in their coins. But the thing is, the more coins you dropped in--and especially the more expensive coins which were larger and heavier--the more sound your offering made going down the funnel. So, obviously, the louder offerings were from the people of means, and everyone couldn't help but notice the offerings of the powerful people, the famous people, the up-and-coming people.

There would have been no reason to notice the sound of just *two copper pennies*, if you could hear them at all. A poor widow had walked up and dropped them in. She would have been *invisible* within that scene—ears and eyes would have been elsewhere.

And, you know how we do things to ourselves... I can imagine that she very well *knew* she was invisible to others in those moments, as she had become in so many others. And being invisible so often to others, in her widowhood, perhaps there was some point when she also became invisible to herself.

But Jesus saw her and called the attention of the disciples to her...for her invisible...sacrificial...generosity. It isn't surprising that Jesus noticed the louder givers, but why would he bother to notice...*her*? What possible importance could a poor widow have?

She was not invisible to Jesus. Jesus had different eyes. He saw things differently. He still does.

You may recall that Jesus was betrayed by Judas...because Judas didn't think Jesus was dealing with *Rome*...with *Caesar*...like he thought Jesus should have. Everywhere you went, there were Roman *soldiers*. Everywhere money was spent or earned, there were Roman *taxes*. Everywhere people talked, Rome was "in the air". *Caesar* was always the topic of the day, because his empire was so immense, absorbing nation after nation under his will. And yet...despite Caesar being such an intensely debated and volatile issue to the Jews, Jesus spoke of Caesar *only once*.* What was Jesus thinking?!

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The easy answer is just to say that Jesus' kingdom was not of this world. After all, that's what Jesus told Pilate, the Roman governor, after Jesus' arrest. But Pilate did not get to be the Roman governor over Judea by being stupid. Pilate could see that, yes, Jesus' kingdom was not *from* this world, but it sure enough was *in* this world...and that was going to be a problem for Caesar's aim to be the undisputed divine authority over all people in his empire. So Jesus was subjected to a cruciform execution reserved especially for political problems.

Jesus had no partisan axe to grind...he was very much aware of the soldiers and the taxes and Caesar. But he wasn't particularly interested in talking about Caesar. He was much more interested in talking about...a poor widow and her sacrificial generosity.

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The gospel books are full of stories of people needing a true neighbor and people being a true neighbor. Jesus saw people in need of generosity. He saw people capable of generosity. Even when a *Roman* centurion came to him worried about his servant's illness, Jesus listened and responded.

Jesus had no boundary...no limit...to the generosity of his seeing other human beings. That's why he was loved...but it was also why he was resisted.

Judas was right that Jesus did not do partisan politics, to his great dismay. But Judas was wrong that Jesus wasn't political. Pilate got that right.

- Jesus' politics were the politics of noticing poor widows...and the invisible.
- Jesus' politics was anybody who needed a neighbor and who was capable of being one.
- Jesus' politics were of generosity...and sacrificial self-giving.
- Jesus' politics were all sinners being humbled and adopted by God in Holy Baptism.
- Jesus' politics were all people bound to one another in Christ in one common fellowship in Holy Communion.
- Jesus' politics were you shall have no other god but the Lord our God.

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The Holy Spirit has been working ever since to teach us in this Way...and obviously the work is never done. Over and over again, we must learn and re-learn...what Jesus is really all about...and what it means to be Christian.

And I'm relearning, right here with you.

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“Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.” Mark 12:17