

Luke 21:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

Analysis

And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. The focus shifts dramatically: from wealthy donors to *chēran tina penichran* (χήραν τινὰ πενιχρὰν, 'a certain poor widow'). The word *penichran* (πενιχρὰν) denotes extreme poverty—not merely lacking wealth but barely surviving. Widows in ancient society had no social safety net; without husband or family support, they faced destitution and hunger.

She gave *duo lepta* (δύο λεπτά, 'two mites')—the smallest Jewish coins in circulation. One *lepton* was 1/128 of a denarius (a day's wage). Mark 12:42 notes these two mites equaled one Roman *quadrans*, the smallest Roman coin. Her gift was essentially worthless by economic standards—too small to purchase anything meaningful. Yet Jesus noticed. He who observed wealthy donors' large contributions also saw the widow's microscopic offering. **Nothing given to God is too small for His attention.**

Historical Context

Widows occupied the lowest social stratum in first-century Judaism. Without inheritance rights and lacking employment opportunities, widows depended on family charity or public gleaning. The Torah commanded provision for widows (Deuteronomy 24:19-21), but religious leaders often exploited rather than protected them (Luke 20:47). That Jesus highlighted a widow's gift immediately after condemning scribes who 'devour widows' houses' (Luke 20:47) creates

devastating irony. The religious elite took from widows; this widow gave her last coins to a corrupt temple system. Jesus' coming judgment on the temple (vv. 5-6) would vindicate her sacrifice and condemn those who devoured the poor under pretense of religion.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus' notice of the widow's tiny gift reveal about what captures God's attention?
2. How should the widow's extreme poverty and sacrificial giving challenge comfortable Christianity that gives from abundance?
3. What is the significance that Jesus highlights a widow's generosity immediately after condemning those who exploit widows?

Interlinear Text

εἶδεν	δέ	καὶ	τινα	χήραν	πενιχρὰν	βάλλουσιν	ἐκεῖ
he saw	And	also	a certain	widow	poor	casting	in thither
G1492	G1161	G2532	G5100	G5503	G3998	G906	G1563

δύο	λεπτά
two	mites
G1417	G3016

Additional Cross-References

Mark 12:42 (Parallel theme): And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

