

Mark 12:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

Analysis

A 'poor widow came, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing' (Ἐλθοῦσα μία χήρα πτωχὴ ἔβαλεν λεπτὰ δύο, ὅ ἐστιν κοδράντης). The widow's gift was two lepta (λεπτά, smallest copper coins) equaling one quadrans (κοδράντης, Roman farthing)—the smallest possible offering. Yet Jesus commended it above all others (v. 43). The widow's 'poverty' (ptōchē, πτωχὴ) means destitute, not merely poor—she lacked life's necessities. Despite desperate need, she gave to God. Her offering demonstrated sacrificial generosity, trust in God's provision, and worship prioritizing God over personal security. Jesus' commendation teaches that God measures giving not by amount but by sacrifice and faith. The widow's faith trusted God to provide despite giving her last resources.

Historical Context

Widows in ancient society faced severe vulnerability—no social security, limited employment options, dependent on family or charity. Mosaic law commanded care for widows (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 14:29; 24:17-21), yet many were neglected. Jesus condemned religious leaders who 'devour widows' houses' (Mark 12:40), exploiting vulnerable people. The widow's gift of two lepta—roughly 1/64 of a denarius (day's wage)—was virtually worthless. She could have kept one, giving only one lepton. Instead she gave both, holding nothing back. This total consecration moved Jesus to commend her above wealthy donors. Paul later instructed churches to honor genuine widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16). Early church developed diaconal ministry caring for widows (Acts 6:1-6).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the widow's gift of her last resources demonstrate faith that trusts God's provision over personal security?
2. What does Jesus' commendation of the widow's tiny gift above large donations teach about God's values in worship and stewardship?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐλθοῦσα	μία	χήρα	πτωχὴ	ἔβαλεν	λεπτὰ	δύο
And	there came	G1520	widow	poor	and she threw in	mites	two
G2532	G2064		G5503	G4434	G906	G3016	G1417
ὅ	ἐστιν	κοδράντης					
G3739	make	a farthing					
	G2076	G2835					

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