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ORDINARY 32B

10th November 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

All that I have is yours, Lord God,

All that I claim as my own is gift, the gift of your all-consuming grace.

Today I turn aside for this time of worship, singing your praise, learning, reflecting and praying.

Today, I take a moment to prepare my heart, mind and body to worship you...

Hold a few moments of stillness

May I know your presence here this day, I pray in Jesus' name,

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar

Reading: Mark 12: 38-44 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

There are many stories in the Bible of people experiencing poverty, and sadly some of these same themes and stories can be seen in our society around us today. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, more than 1 in 5 people in the UK live in poverty. That's 14.4 million people, including 4.2 million children and 2.1 million pensioners. And because of our avoidance of the subject, people in poverty may feel shame about their lack of financial resources. Jesus, however, was more likely to shame the rich!

In the gospel passage from Mark, Jesus criticises VIPs who look holy but only give a fraction of their wealth away. Meanwhile, they are taking advantage of widows, who are left at the mercy of the state or extended family when their income-making husband dies. Interestingly, though we tend to praise the widow in the Mark passage for her generosity in giving "all that she has", some commentators note that just four verses earlier, Jesus has criticised the teachers of the law for devouring widow's houses. And two verses later, he prophesies the destruction of the temple. We might respect the widow's generosity, but does that mean that it was right for the temple to take **all** her money? Those VIPs were called out not just for their pride in showing off their wealth, but also for their neglect of financially caring towards this widow and others like her.

Maybe you identify more with the widow in Jesus's story. We have little, but we give a lot. Perhaps more than we really should. What would be God's message of love to us today?

I'm sure none of us want to identify with the teachers of the law, called out for giving only to look good. But perhaps, in our deepest of hearts, some of us must confess that we do not give out of an attitude of generosity or compassion, but because of the status our giving brings us. How might God be lovingly asking us to reconsider how our finances could play a role in sharing God's love with the community around us, and those far away?

Many of us may feel like the disciples in Mark's gospel. We are bystanders, watching the crisis from a comfortable position of observation, not really feeling involved personally. We don't feel particularly in need, but neither do we feel flush with cash, or like we are actively causing the problem. We feel empathetic to what others go through, we judge some for their attitudes towards money, we give where we can. But we feel helpless to make much of

a difference as the challenges are huge, and far beyond us. How might God be calling on us to show love to those around us, whether financially or in other ways?

Maybe you don't feel like any of these people, and that's fine too. But be encouraged that whatever your financial situation, and whether you feel burdened, ashamed, uncomfortable, desperate, or eager to take action, God sees you, God knows you, God loves you, and God believes you are worthy.

Responding in action

- Jesus speaks of the widow's generosity. But do you think some commentators are right to question the temple's acceptance of her money? What might be a different response to the widow, other than taking her money, that is still respectful and loving of her generosity?
- If you are interested in exploring how you or your church could rethink its attitudes to money and poverty, take a look at The Joint Public Issues Team website (<https://jpit.uk/issues/poverty-and-inequality>) and Church on the Margins area of the Methodist Church website (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/evangelism-growth/discover-church-at-the-margins/>).

Responding in music

46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

God of all grace,
Show me how to use the resources I have,
The blessings you have given to me, to each of us,
To transform society and bring peace and justice,
In the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers

Monday 11th November

- On this day of remembrance, we know there are still wars and conflicts raging all around the world. Today, we pray for peace, and pray that we can make a world in which peace is possible for all of humanity, and all creation.
Amen.

Tuesday 12th November

- What do you need to learn from the natural world today? What do you need to see in your surroundings that might help you in your spiritual journey?
- Listen to the world around you, look for signs that God is at work.

Wednesday 13th November

- Draw a picture of your local church.
- Include on the picture all the ways you see God at work, and all the things you want to ask God to work in. Pray about it.

Thursday 14th November

- God of all blessings,
Thank you for the gift of food to eat,
For the flavours and the smells,
The energy and enjoyment I can get from the food I eat.
- I'm sorry for all the times I've taken for granted the food on my plate, the ingredients in my fridge, the ready meals in my freezer.
And for all the other blessings I have received that I often overlook or forget to be thankful for.
Thank you Lord, for you are good to me. Amen.

Friday 15th November

- Be still.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still for the presence of the Lord is in this place.
Find spaces for stillness today. Be still, with no objective or intention, other than stillness, which is an end in itself.

Saturday 16th November

- Gracious God, I know you have plans for me- plans for me to be a part of your kingdom and an agent of love in the world.
- Today, show me how to respond to the invitations I might receive. Help me to be open to the opportunities to share your love.
- In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.