

In many ways our readings today point to stewardship

Caring for the gifts God has given us

And returning those very gifts to God

True stewardship is not about money

It is about recognizing truth

Recognizing that all we have been given comes from God

And how we return those gifts to God

Stewardship turns our normal way of thinking on its head

We think that to have more

We need to keep more

We need to invest more

But true wealth comes when we give what we have

The more we give, the more we have

Christ can only enter when we are empty

In our reading from Kings, Elijah is far from his land

He is sent to a widow

A woman that has no one to rely upon herself

She has left her father's house for marriage

So he has no need to provide for her

And her husband has died

So he cannot provide for her

They are facing a drought

For 3 years no rain

They have nothing left

Only a bit of flour and oil

Enough for one small meal for her and her son

Then they will die

Along comes a stranger

Asking for a some water

The custom of the time required hospitality

To anyone that asks

A friend or family member

A stranger

Even to an enemy

So she goes off to get water

And he calls out for a bit of bread as well

As the Lord your God lives

I have nothing

I was just going to prepare our last meal

And we will die

Dire straits for sure

And he tells her

Do as you propose

But first, take care of me

Then he makes her a promise

The jar of flour will not go empty

Nor will the jug of oil run dry

The woman responds in faith

And she is rewarded

She and her son are taken care of for a year

Until the rains return

We see another generous widow in our Gospel

But it more than just a generous heart

It is a generous heart directed by faith

As Jesus and his disciples are seated in the Temple

This widow comes in

She is not named

But is seen in generous hearts throughout history

She places in the Temple treasury

2 small coins

In today's currency, no more than 50 cents

The containers for the collections were large metal containers

Shaped like a trumpet

The currency of the day was coins

Dropping coins into these containers made a lot of noise

Some would make a show if their deposit

But the widow had only 2 small coins

As she placed them in the container

Jesus sees more than her donation

He sees into her heart

Like our first widow

She trusts in God

And she gives away everything she has

The actions of these 2 widows are seen in contrast with the scribes

Now not all scribes are bad

Just last week, Jess praised a scribe for his insight

But today

He gives us a warning

These scribes are going for show

They are wearing their sanctuary garments out in public

They are saying long public prayers

So others can see them

They desire seats of honor at the synagogue and at banquets

**Some have even used their privileged roles to take advantage of
widows**

They do not care about them

Only about themselves

Jesus doesn't condemn their teaching

It is how they apply their teaching to their own lives

They are not stewards

They are simply takers and users

Counting on endless generosity of those in their care

These two widows are examples of good stewards for us

They were generous with the gifts God had given them

And they responded in faith to the needs placed before them

Stewardship is a funny thing

It goes against the law of economics

It is seen in what John Paul calls the law of the gift

Economic sense tells us to hang on to what we have

That we grow when we hang on to what we have

Wealth, pleasure, honor, power

Even time to be used for what we want

But the law of the gift says no

We grow in being the more we give

Because God is the source of all being

Everything we have we have received

When we give in love

Our being increases in proportion to our gift

The more we give

The more we grow

This is contradictory to what the world tells us

And this is part of the mystery of life

Our best example for this mystery is Christ

He gave everything for us

He offered up his dignity and glory as the Son of God

He became the son of man

So we could become children of God

He became poor for our sake

So we could become rich

He died

So we might have eternal life

He continues to give of himself in the Eucharist

To feed and strengthen our souls in this life

He gave everything, emptying himself

So we could receive everything

And offer it back to him

And to the world

That is the foundation of our generosity

Not to give so we can receive the honors

But to give so God will be honored

Whether it is time

Talent or money

Or whether it is our pride

Our desire to do things our way

Relying on our intellect

When we decide to conform our lives to God and His Church

Rather than trying to conform them to our perceptions

This is stewardship

It is not about how much we give

It is offering what we have with love and faith

It is that we need to give

Our hearts are wired to give

God made us this way

It is why the law of the gift is a law

Written on the human heart

Made in the image and likeness of God

When we are generous

And act in faith

We are reflecting God to the world

When we hold back

When we desire to keep all we have

Only so we can get more

We are imaging Satan and his fall from God

God will not be outdone in generosity

Our generosity is finite because we are finite

God's is infinite

His blessings are infinite

His reward is infinite