

**PENTECOST:
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 27

November 8, 2009

1 Kings 17:8-16

Psalm 146

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44

Two Pesos

In the summer of 1996, I served as a student missionary in the Philippines. Every day seemed to bring a life-changing experience of some kind or another. I worked for Bonuan First Baptist Church and we (the pastor, my partner in missions, and I) would go to visit people throughout the barrio to pray with them or lead Bible studies.

One morning, the pastor told us that we would be going to an elderly woman's house to pray for her because she was destitute. Her children were all adults and had moved away, so she was left as a widow with no financial support except for the generosity of the church. It was only when we arrived at the woman's house that I truly realized the significance of what the pastor was trying to help us understand. Her "house" was mostly made of sticks and some corrugated tin, with a roof made of leaves. When we entered her home, she would not look us in the eyes because she felt ashamed. According to Filipino hospitality, it is customary to give food and beverages to guests. The whole time we were there, she cried and gave thanks to God because we had come to see her.

Two days later, we were leading a Bible study in a banana grove close to her house. After we started, we saw her walk up, but she stayed in the back. When we were finished, she came to me – still with her head bent down – and slid something in the pages of my Bible. She, then, took my hand and placed it on her forehead, which is a custom that shows ultimate respect – grandchildren do this to their grandparents. She said, "*Salamat po*" which translates something like "Thank you, sir," and walked away. I looked in the pages of my Bible to see what she had given me, and it was a two-peso coin. She had given me everything she had!

The connection between this experience and the story in Mark of the widow giving her two coins overwhelmed me. Here, as well as in the 1 Kings passage, widows give everything they have. Sometimes, the most vulnerable in society give their lives (or livelihoods) to God's purposes. I wonder what would happen if this type of generosity defined the lives of all God's children. Imagine the kind of world we could live in.

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. K. Jason Coker, an ordained minister with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and pastor of Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Connecticut. Visit www.wiltonbaptist.org to learn more about the ministries of Wilton Baptist Church.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Micronesia – With prayers for the revision of the Marshallese Bible into the new orthographic spelling system and that this new translation will ensure that the Bible is easily understood by young people, and with prayers that the Churches will continue to grow despite the many challenges that they face; **India** – With thanks to God for the ability to respond to the enormous challenges in this complex country and for achievements in translation, staff training, and work among widows, and with prayers for the hospital evangelism project, for the launch of new publications including Study Bibles and Bibles in a variety of languages, and Scriptures for the hearing impaired, and with prayers for ongoing preparations for the Bible Society's bicentenary celebrations in 2011, and with prayers for Bible work in Bhutan; **Nepal** – With thanks to God for two Scripture launches last year: the Simple Nepali Holy Bible and the books of Ruth and Hosea in Tibetan Common Language, and with prayers for work on the New Revised Version Nepali Bible and for unity among the different political parties in Nepal so that they are able to lead the country toward peace, justice, and prosperity.

Activity Corner: “Two Pennies Plus Two”

Supplies needed: Bible; two pennies for each participant; jar for collecting pennies (and/or other currency) throughout the week.

Read Mark 12:38-44. Distribute two pennies to each member of your household and invite everyone to talk about what two pennies could purchase today. What could be purchased if everyone gave their pennies to be combined into one total? In today's Gospel text, a poor widow gives all she had. The story follows a stinging attack on religious leaders who were oppressing the poor (Mark 12:38-40). What motivated the widow to give all she had? Should she have kept one of the coins for herself? She didn't have to make a gift at all, but she chose to give all she had to God. How does Jesus' rebuke of the rich challenge us to examine the root causes of poverty in our society today? Collect all the pennies in a jar and encourage everyone to contribute two pennies plus two more the next day; and then double the amount each consecutive day throughout the week (e.g., 4 cents on Day 2; 8 cents on Day 3, etc.). On the last day (Day 7), everyone will be contributing \$1.28, and each one's grand total should be \$2.54. At the end of the week, calculate the total of everyone's donations (multiply \$2.54 by the number of people) and determine what food item (s) could be purchased with the combined amount and donate those items to a local shelter or food pantry. Conclude by discussing the impact of sharing resources for the common good.