

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B (2021)

I would like to ask you a few questions in which you are allowed only two possible answers. Think in your mind which answers you might give.

- Are you a good friend or a bad friend?
- Are you a good driver or a bad driver?
- Are you a fair person or unfair?
- Are you honest or untrustworthy?
- And finally, you probably saw this coming, are you wealthy or poor?

To that last question, I would have to interject, “define wealthy”? The most basic definition of ‘wealth’ is the sum total of assets minus liabilities.

Of the more than 700 billionaires in the United States, the richest five (Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Ellison, and Elon Musk) saw a 113 percent increase in their combined wealth during the pandemic, from \$349 billion to \$743 billion, and just the top three held combined fortunes worth more than the total wealth of the poorest 50 percent of Americans.

I’m always a little amazed that when I talk to people who are quite well off, they always consider themselves to be “middle class”. No one wants to admit that they have WAY more money than most people, and no one wants to admit that they are “wealthy”.

That's one "category" many of us strive all our lives to be in, but then deny we are "in" it when we get there.

**"Amen, I say to you, this poor widow
put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury."**

This Gospel story from Mark is one that makes many of us pretty uncomfortable (myself included). After all, one person in the story gave all she had, and others gave just some of the "extra" they could do without.

Maybe you're in the same boat. I give a little here and there. I think about what I can "afford" before I make a donation. (Of course, what I can "afford" is always less than what I REALLY can "afford".) And I worry that God is disappointed in me, unhappy that I'm not more like the poor widow in the story.

And herein lies the question, how was she able to do what she did?

My guess is that maybe (surprisingly) she didn't really consider herself to be poor, didn't consider herself to be a have-not— at least when it came to the things that truly mattered.

She had plenty. She had more than enough— because the only thing that was important to her was doing the right thing— something good and loving and generous. Something that would be pleasing to God.

She wasn't worried about what was practical. She wasn't worried about going broke— because what she was ultimately giving was love— and maybe she knew that would never run out.

You know, it probably won't hurt anyone if we delude ourselves into believing we are good drivers or we have a great sense of humor or are fair and honest and hardworking and a great friend.

Most of us tell ourselves lies all the time. And it's also probably OK if we keep telling ourselves we aren't financially well-off when we really are.

But as Christians, as disciples of Jesus, we must consider ourselves wealthy when it comes to the blessings of God; we must consider ourselves wealthy when it comes to what it takes to do whatever God is asking of us.

And these are the sorts of things of which we can never run out— things like mercy, kindness, love, compassion, forgiveness. If it is truly our heart's desire, God will make sure we are wealthy beyond our imagination.

Because you see, a rich person without God, is just a poor person with money.