

The title for today's message is: **All Or Nothing**

Jesus Said: ***And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box."***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen

I heard an interesting story about a self-made millionaire who was giving a talk to a group of people about how he made his fortune from nothing.

He spoke about how he left school at an early age and worked hard to make ends meet.

He said he took some risks and eventually it paid off, he said he is where he is today because he took those risks.

Starting with nothing he said anybody could do what he did. So he challenged the listeners to go out and make their own fortune as he did.

When question time came a young man stood up, he looked at the self-made millionaire and said I dare you to do it again. The rich man was left speechless.

Could he take the risk again he thought? Could he give it all up and try it again to make his fortune from nothing.

Look when he was poor, he had nothing to lose so he was prepared to take risks. Now it was different, he was now rich.

Now in our text this morning we were told about a woman who took a risk. We don't know much about her, not even her name.

Yet we do know she is a poor widow, which isn't surprising, because widows weren't highly regarded in those days.

She certainly wouldn't have inherited her husband's wealth and of course there was no social security.

The money that she had, probably came from begging. Yet here in our gospel we were told she put everything she owned into the Temple Offering as her gift to God.

What makes this story meaningful for me, is that the poor widow had 2 coins. She could easily have put one in the offering and kept one for herself.

But she gave it all to God? Think about it for a moment. The offering plate is coming around, you have 2 \$5.00 bills.

And that's all you have to your name at the time. You have 3 options: Put both in, like the widow did.

Put one in and keep one for yourself to perhaps buy lunch, or you can keep both for yourself to ensure you also have enough for dinner.

Given her poor situation, I'm sure God wouldn't have minded if she had kept both for herself, after all, the rich were putting in quite a lot of money.

But, what would you have done? Perhaps you would have held back one, but would there have been a problem doing so?

After all you need to eat, you need money in order to survive, right? But this woman put in everything she had, everything.

Our text says, “**she put in all she had to live on.** In the Greek its a little bit different and gives a better perspective, it says she gave her “whole life.”

That’s what her offering meant, she gave her whole life to God. She would walk out of the temple area with absolutely nothing.

Nothing, that is, except her faith in God. Now if you think you would have put both coins in, ask yourself this.

Would you do the same today given your current financial position? Would you be prepared to give it all up for the sake of God?

Now we know that we’re not saved by the amount of money we give to God. But that’s not what Jesus is talking about here.

No, Jesus is challenging people who are giving only part of their life to God. This woman gave her whole life to God. Not just part of it.

Look, God is not interested in part of your life, he wants it all. In fact, Jesus says that giving only part of your life to God is worse than giving none of it.

In the book of Revelation Jesus condemns the church at Laodicea. He condemned them for being lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, only half committed to God.

Look, one or the other, God can work with. The church thought they were rich but in fact they were poor, that is in their faith.

That was the Pharisees’ problem. They were called hypocrites. They loved to show off their religious commitment.

They took all the glamour of their high calling. But at the same time had no problems living lives of selfishness.

Jesus condemned them and warned everyone to look away from them. They were worse than the merchants and con artists that existed in the marketplace.

Because you see the Pharisees were God's representatives and when you are lukewarm, only partly committed to God, its difficult to see your faults, and easy to justify them.

When you are lukewarm then it means you are living a lie, for example; saying you love God, but not with your whole heart.

The Pharisees and teachers of the Law back then truly thought they were the best and most committed to God in faith.

On the outside they looked to be doing the right thing before God. They wore the right clothes and they prayed long, long prayers.

They were seated in the high places in the synagogues. Everyone respected them. But in fact, their faith was weak, if not non existent.

Yet, as far as they were concerned, nothing could have been better in their relationship with God.

The truth is they needed to be challenged. Jesus is saying that it's not the outside things that make us right before God, its what's inside us.

Jesus reminds us here that anyone who has become complacent in their faith, thanking that they will be saved by what they do.

As a Christian, one of the most alarming passages that I have read is found in Matthew chapter 7 where Jesus said: ***On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons***

*in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’*

I don't know about you, but that sends a chill down my spine. How do I know that I am not one of those who cry out Lord, Lord yet will be refused heaven.

How do I know that God will say to me, well done my good and faithful servant enter into heaven. So how do we know? Can we be sure?

Yes we can be sure, in fact were reminded of that in our 2nd lesson for today; Hebrews chapter 9, it says: **And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.**

In our baptism we had a special promise made to us. God gave us the assurance of life everlasting when we were marked with the sign of the cross.

We cannot get this assurance anywhere else. Not in our good deeds, nor anywhere in the world.

Only in a faithful relationship with God through Jesus Christ can we be sure that when Jesus returns we will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now church attendance doesn't assure us of heaven nor does it make us Christians.

But where else will you hear the true Word of God and receive the sacraments if not through the church.

Where else do we hear the word that tells us about Jesus and the forgiveness of our sins and how he died for our sins?

Jesus gives us all a warning; that those who have received the Good News of salvation, but reject it will certainly face the most severe punishment.

But those of us who put our faith in Jesus and his sacrifice for our sins, eternal life is indeed assured.

There will be no surprise on judgment day for those who put their faith in Jesus because Christ's blood forgives all our sins.

And here in God's house you have direct access to that life giving blood when you come to the Lord's Supper.

Here in God's house you have the assurance of God's blessing as he comes to you in his word.

The woman in our text did not hold anything back as she gave her life into that offering.

But more importantly, Jesus did not hold anything back as he put his entire life onto the cross to pay for our sins and give us life everlasting in the Kingdom of heaven.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.