

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Nov 23rd 2015

The stories of Daniel in the Bible were never stories for children. They were about wisdom, knowledge, proficiency and the ability to exercise cautious and discreet judgment in practical matters.

This sounds very adult, but I don't think the stories of Daniel were about older adults either. It seems to me that the stories of Daniel were written for young adults, for those with promise – those who are good looking, intelligent, and quick to learn. That would certainly be the students at Creighton University. How then, can we help them prepare for leadership roles? Should we give them special treatment as entitled heirs? Should we wine and dine them and promise them the good life? Or should we ask them to consider who they really are and in whose kingdom are they called to serve? Should we train them to have skills to be successful in the kingdom of this world or should we test them to reveal their strengths to serve in the Kingdom of God?

These lessons ask me to consider what can Creighton University professors do to help students see that education is not just about doing well in an elite institution so they can be successful elites in the larger society. Education should be about gaining wisdom along with knowledge. It should be about prudence as well as proficiency. A good teacher, I think, is one who challenges students to open themselves to the Lord who looks into the depths of their hearts to find their strengths. That is what we most need right now. Our planet is in trouble. Our global society is under siege at every level. We cannot afford to let any student sleep through class. We must charge them to “Stay awake” for something much bigger than the semester exam.

What does all that have to do with the widow and two small coins? I think it has to do with how we teach as much as how we give. Teaching is a form of giving. We can teach from our knowledge....that is our surplus wealth. Or we can teach from our hearts, from our own poverty, from the place where we also seek wisdom. Professors have a lot of knowledge, but if we are honest, we must acknowledge that none of us has all the answers to the world's problems. We also are beggars. We must have open hearts as well as open minds in seeking the knowledge and proficiency to be better teachers just as we ask students to be more open learners. Please pray for me and others who don't just teach knowledge, but love of and commitment to learning. Pray that we can instill in our students the self-discipline they need to be wise and prudent -- to not only seek knowledge, but to seek understanding. And join with me in praying that we can open their hearts to commit to life-long learning in the pursuit of truth and justice. That is what Daniel did, and he was very successful.

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