

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jun 10th 2017

I believe I am similar to many of us when evaluating the worth of personal achievement . I evaluate achievements primarily on external criteria, eg., how impressive are the external details regarding the achievement? For instance, in the university setting where I work, the observable criteria relate to scholarly publications, teaching evaluations, and service on university committees.

Jesus confronts us today with an entirely different criteria for evaluating achievement. Note today's gospel. Jesus comments on the procession of Jews in line to contribute to the temple treasury singling out a poor widow. Pay attention to his observation on the scene:

“Amen, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.”

Jesus' evaluation of the significance of the contributions is based not on the amount of the contribution given but on the quality of heart underlying the contribution. Jesus' evaluation is measured by internal criteria of love and self sacrifice.

We Christians have to ask a crucial question: How do our personal criteria for acknowledging achievement relate to Jesus'? For instance as a Christian university professor, is my achievement proportionate to my external success in teaching, scholarship and service? Or is my achievement proportionate to the quality of love and generosity underlying these activities?

This gospel story prompts a searing question: Whose kingdom do our daily activities serve -- God's or our own?

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