READ: Mark 12:42, 43 (Common English Bible)

“One poor widow came forward and put in two small copper coins worth a penny. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ‘I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than everyone who’s been putting money in the treasury.’”

REFLECT:

Tom Tewell once shared with me that the deepest brokenness experienced by the homeless is that they go unnoticed. The desire that others see them and acknowledge them, the longing that others acknowledge them as people who share this earth with them, is deeper than the hunger of an empty stomach or the fear for personal safety. Every person longs for a sense of value, for love, and for recognition. The homeless are no different. Nor are the homeless alone in this struggle. People who are older and single, those who struggle with addiction, and the under-resourced all experience the fear of remaining unnoticed. We do not live in the most compassionate of times, and such people join the great shuffle – where our communities move them out of sight and mind. Our full and frantic lives may be partly to blame. We simply do not have the time or emotional energy to acknowledge these people and be available to them.

Here, in Mark’s Gospel, there are two stories at play, each unfolding simultaneously. The legal experts comprise that cast for the first narrative, a poor widow in a solo performance for the second narrative. In the first story, the legal experts go to considerable effort that others see them for their devotion and sacrifice. In the second story, a widow has probably abandoned any hope that anyone will ever notice her again. There is no attempt by this woman to ensure that people see her. She simply makes her gift to the temple treasury from an impulse of faith, an impulse that discloses her quiet gratitude and trust in God. Jesus notices both, the legal experts and the woman. Yet, what is remarkable in this text is that those who desired an audience received Jesus’ displeasure. The one who did not seek any notice is held-up by Jesus as an honorable example of authentic discipleship.

The poor widow is invisible – that is, invisible to everyone except Jesus. Moreover, what Jesus sees is that the woman is contributing – however small – to a cause that is larger than her own life. There are “invisible” people in our communities who feel unattractive, have little to offer anyone, and are lonely. The despair that they experience makes moving through each day unbearable. Each invisible person in our orbit presents an opportunity to share the companionship and compassion of Christ. An invitation to dinner, to family celebrations, and even acknowledging their birthdays, proclaims that they are people with dignity and worth. We are the children of a God who notices and protects the unnoticed, and therefore, we are to be agents of God’s protecting and providing grace. Additionally, we are to recall that the woman’s gift reminds us that each person has something to contribute to the work of the church.

Perhaps the deepest impact any church can have on a community is to invest in the lives of persons who may go unnoticed where we live. There is a story in Jewish tradition of a rabbi who was so holy that the rumor developed that on Sabbath afternoons he ascended into heaven to personally
commune with God. The rumor grew from the observation that this rabbi simply seemed to disappear from sight in the local community until the end of day. Several boys decided to follow, in secret, the rabbi. Throughout the afternoon and into the early evening, they saw the rabbi go into the homes of the elderly, the sick, and the poor. He cooked meals, cleaned homes, and read scripture to the lonely. The next day the people inquired of the boys; did the rabbi really ascend into heaven? The boys answered, “No. He went much higher.”

RESPOND:

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you? **Pray:** “What would you have me hear, O Lord?”

2. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayer to pray? **Pray:** “What would you have me do, O Lord?”

PRAY:

*God of all people, remove from my eyes those things that prevent me from seeing others, especially those who are lonely. Then direct my response to them that they may experience your grace. Amen.*