**A Tale of Two Women**: Mark 12: 41-44 & Mark 14: 1-9

The Widows gift or mite and the anointing of Jesus feet are unusual readings for Lent, but we know that these events took place just before Holy week. (*by reading the three accounts in Mark, John and Luke*). I realize that only people of my generation will know what the widow’s mite is. When the Bible was translated into English the translators thought the small copper coin was like the mite; half a farthing or quarter of a half penny…its almost nothing.

Jesus is preparing for the last days of his Ministry on earth. Getting ready for the last supper, he is about to turn over the money changers tables and predict the fall of Jerusalem. It’s at this point that Mark and Luke tell us this story.

Mark 12: 41-44

[*Many people believe that Mark wrote down the notes he made while listening to Peter preaching (see, Peters Preaching, by Dr J Duff)*. *He strung his anecdotes together ‘like a string of pearls’, for effect rather than chronology. But Luke also puts this story just before Jesus predicts the fall of Jerusalem and before Judas decided to betray Jesus.*]

Jesus is preparing for torture and death, not by self-isolating or in prayer, he sits opposite the temple treasury.

Luke tells us that some people wanted to talk about the fine stones and votive offerings on the temple. But Jesus is not interested in site seeing, He is watching, waiting for a widow to come into the temple court and drop two small copper coins into the offering box. Jesus said she had given more than anyone else because she gave from her poverty; she did not have enough and still gave. The others gave out of their excess. Jesus is watching like a spectator, for the one of the great events of his time on earth. Like an eclipse of the sun or a big concert, he did not want to miss this. This is not a thought for the day moment, ‘every penny counts in Gods eyes’…this event turned everything upside down. What you give is important to Jesus. Not because he needs the offering but because he loves you. I am in no doubt that Judas, who was Jesus treasurer, was sent out on a mission that night to give her a gift from Jesus funds. (That is what the disciples think is happening in John 13:29)

…*we will come back to the widow shortly*.

Mark 14: 1-9

Before Jesus arrived in Jerusalem (or perhaps when he returned to Bethany for the night) he was having a meal with friends. Mary of Bethany, Lazarus and Martha’s sister, anoints him with precious oil. The perfume was worth nearly a year’s salary, that’s over 19,000 times the gift of the widow. Judas complains about the extravagant gift; this money could be given to the poor (*see John 12:6*), what about the poor widow? Now Mary wasn’t poor, this was a lavish gift, gone in a moment. Jesus says her story will be told everywhere, alongside the gospel message. Think about that, her sacrifice is to be told alongside the message of the Gospel.

Some Fifty days after Jesus died the disciples were gathered praying. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and the new Jesus community was changed forever. They began to give and give, pilling money at the feet of the disciples…more than enough to feed all the widows and orphans in Jerusalem. Now, do you think the poor widow missed out? Her gift opened the doors of heaven and changed the way the church behaves forever.

Follow Jesus. What about giving to your food bank, support refugee action, increase your giving to your church……. time to pray.