

The Heart of the Widow

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Let us do that which is necessary to have the widow's heart, truly rejoicing in the blessings that will fill the "want" that results.

I have had the great blessing of serving among the Saints of the Pacific for most of my adult life. The faith, love, and amazing sacrifices of these devoted Saints fill me with inspiration, gratitude, and joy. Their stories are like your own.

It has occurred to me that these Saints have much in common with the widow whom the Savior observed while He "sat ... and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites. ...

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For ... they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."¹

Even though her two mites were a meager contribution, to the Savior her gift was of supreme value, because she gave everything. In that moment, the Savior fully knew the widow, for her gift showed Him her heart. The quality and depth of her love and faith were such that she gave knowing that her "want" would be supplied.

I have seen that same heart in the Saints of the Pacific. In a small village on one of these islands, an older man and his wife accepted the invitation of the missionaries to sincerely ask the Lord if the lessons they were being taught were true. In this process, they also considered the consequences of the commitments that they would need to make if the answer that they received led to their accepting the restored gospel. They fasted and prayed to know the truthfulness of the Church and the veracity of the Book of Mormon. The answer to their prayers came in the form of a sweet but ringing affirmation: "Yes! It is true!"

Having received this witness, they chose to be baptized. This was not a choice without personal cost. Their decision and baptism carried with them a high price. They lost employment, they sacrificed social standing, important friendships dissolved, and the support, love, and respect of family were withdrawn. They now walked to church each

Sunday, exchanging awkward glances with friends and neighbors who were walking in the opposite direction.

In these difficult circumstances, this good brother was asked how he felt about their decision to join the Church. His simple and unwavering reply was "It is true, isn't it? Our choice was clear."

These two newly converted Saints truly had the heart of the widow. They, like the widow, "cast in all" that they could give, knowingly giving of their "want." As a product of their believing hearts and enduring faith during those hard times, their burdens were lightened. They were aided and surrounded by supportive and ministering Church members, and they were personally strengthened by their service in Church callings.

After they cast in their "all," the greatest day came when they were sealed in the temple as an eternal family. Like He did the converts under Alma's leadership, "the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."² Such is the heart of the widow exemplified in this wonderful couple.

Let me speak of another experience where the heart of the widow was in full view. In Samoa, we labor with village councils to gain access for missionaries to preach the gospel. A few years ago, I had a conversation with a chief from a village where the missionaries had been prohibited for many, many years. My conversation occurred not too long after the paramount chief had opened the village to the Church, permitting our missionaries to teach those interested in learning about the gospel and its doctrines.

After so many years, to have this miraculous turn of events, I was curious to learn about what had happened to cause the paramount chief to take this action. I asked about this, and the chief with whom I was conversing replied, "A man can live in the dark for a period, but there will come a time when he will long to come into the light."

The paramount chief, in opening the village, demonstrated the heart of the widow—a heart that softens when the warmth and light of the truth is revealed. This leader was willing to relinquish years of tradition, confront much opposition, and stand firm so that others might be blessed. This was a leader whose heart was focused on the welfare and happiness of his people rather than on considerations of tradition, culture, and personal power. He gave away those concerns in favor of what President Thomas S. Monson has taught us: "As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others."³

Finally, let me share with you one more experience among the Saints of the Pacific that remains deeply and spiritually rooted in my soul. Some years ago I was a young counselor to a bishop in a new ward in American Samoa. We had 99 members, consisting of subsistence farmers, cannery workers, government employees, and their families. When the First Presidency announced in 1977 that a temple was going to be

constructed in Samoa, there was joy and thanksgiving expressed by all of us. Going to the temple from American Samoa at that time required traveling either to Hawaii or New Zealand. This was a costly journey that was beyond the reach of many faithful Church members.

During this period of time members were encouraged to donate to a building fund to assist in the construction of temples. In this spirit, our bishopric asked the ward members to prayerfully consider what they could give. A date was set for families to gather to offer their donations. Later, as these donations were opened in private, our bishopric was humbled and touched by the faith and generosity of our wonderful ward members.

Knowing each family and their circumstances, I felt a deep and abiding sense of awe, respect, and humility. These were, in every way, modern-day widow's mites given freely from their "want," with a joy in the promised blessing of the construction of a holy temple of the Lord in Samoa. These families had consecrated all that they could to the Lord, with the faith that they would not be left wanting. Their gift manifested their widow's hearts. All who gave did so willingly and joyfully because the widow's heart within them could see with the eye of faith the great crowning blessings in store for their families and for all of the people of Samoa and American Samoa for generations to come. I know that their consecrated offerings, their widow's mites, were known and accepted by the Lord.

The heart of the widow who gave her two mites is a heart that will give all by making sacrifices; by enduring hardship, persecution, and rejection; and by bearing burdens of many kinds. The heart of the widow is a heart that senses, feels, and knows the light of truth and will give anything to embrace that truth. It also helps others to see that same light and come to the same measure of eternal happiness and joy. Finally, the heart of the widow is defined by a willingness to give all for building up the kingdom of God on the earth.

Let us join as worldwide Saints in doing that which is necessary to have the widow's heart, truly rejoicing in the blessings that will fill the "want" that results. My prayer for each of us is a plea to have the heart to bear our burdens, make necessary sacrifices, and have the will to do and to give. I promise that the Lord will not leave you wanting. The heart of the widow is filled with thanksgiving that the Savior was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"⁴ so that we would not need to taste the "bitter cup."⁵ In spite of our weaknesses and failings, and because of them, He continues to offer His hands, which were pierced for our sakes. He will lift us up if we are willing to come into the light of His gospel, embrace Him, and allow Him to fill our "want."

I bear my testimony of the great love that we can share as disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I love and sustain President Thomas S. Monson as the prophet of God on the earth. The Book of Mormon is another witness of Jesus Christ to the world, and I invite all to read it and discover its message for you. All who accept the Lord's invitation to come unto Him will find peace, love, and light. Jesus Christ is our

great Exemplar and Redeemer. It is only through Jesus Christ, and the miracle of His infinite Atonement, that we can receive eternal life. Of this I bear witness in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

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