

**Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
*1 Kings 17:10-16; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44*

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The first reading and the Gospel passage in today's readings focus our attention on widows. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the plight of widows was severe. Regarded as outcasts, they were seen as having been abandoned by God. Prosperity in those days was usually a sign of God's favor, and widows had no way of accumulating either wealth or status.

Today's readings, however, show a side to the character in these two widows that would not necessarily be expected given their dire straits. Because the widow in Kings was willing to share what she did not have with Elijah, she and her son were able to eat for an entire year. The widow in Mark's gospel received Jesus' blessing as she gave from her need rather than from her abundance.

In the Temple precinct at the time of Jesus were thirteen trumpet-shaped containers in which alms were placed for the upkeep of the Temple. As the coins of the day rolled to the bottom of the containers, the noise would reverberate throughout the area, announcing the generosity of the donor. The widow's small gift would hardly have echoed at all. But the generosity of her spirit caught the attention of Jesus; his praise of her would catch the attention of the others who were gathered that day.

We live in a culture that thinks "big" is better, not unlike the culture of Jesus. The larger the car, the larger the bank account, the larger the house—all point to success and comfort. Those not having abundance are often looked down upon as lacking in ambition.

The second reading gives us the paradigm for our generosity, our self-donation. Jesus in his death and resurrection extended himself beyond any earthly temple, however fine it might be, and entered God's eternal Temple. In his entry into sacred time and space, our entry into that same space and time has begun; our transformation will be complete only when Jesus returns in glory. As we look toward his second coming, we must ready ourselves with our generosity and compassion to those who have less than we.

Jesus continues to turn his world and ours upside down as he looks at the values we profess and attempts to turn us in another direction. As we go forth to live our week, will we proclaim our Christian values from our abundance or our need?