

Picture a small child, riding in a supermarket cart being pushed by his mother. He's been throwing a tantrum for the past 10 minutes. The other shoppers are looking at them with annoyance, but his mother goes on with her shopping as though nothing has happened. She knows how to handle the situation. She's seen it before. Her son — who's cried himself out by now — realizes he's not getting anywhere with this tactic. So he stops, ending his fearsome crying with a pathetic whimper. *Enough is enough.*

Imagine, if you will, a man who's been struggling for many months with a disturbing thought. He's always enjoyed having a drink with dinner, but lately it seems that one drink has turned into two, or three or so many he's lost count. His marriage is on the rocks, his children give him disapproving glances, and his boss has been threatening to fire him because he's habitually late. A good friend of his, who's in recovery himself, recently reached out to him and told him about Alcoholics Anonymous and how it literally saved his life. He's given him his card and said, "Call me any time." The man fishes the card out of his top dresser drawer. *Enough is enough.*

Picture a husband and wife who have reached an impasse in their marriage. For years now, they've traced and retraced the same pathways, resurrected the same tired, old arguments. There seems to be no solution, no way out of the logical and emotional tangle into which they've collapsed. Over the years, they have both suggested that maybe they should go to their minister for help, or maybe a therapist — but each time, one of them has been unwilling. Now, they look at each other, and both of them realize it's the only solution. They'll go to seek help, at last. *Enough is enough.*

In countless circumstances, saying "Enough is enough" is a good thing. It's a recognition that it's time to cease our pointless striving. It's a decision to move on. But why is it that in each of these situations somebody's finally able to say,

“Enough is enough,” —yet when it comes to the accumulation of material wealth in this world, most of us still believe the sky’s the limit? “You can never be too rich or too thin,” said the Duchess of Windsor, who married King Edward VIII of England. And to quote a character in one of Jesus’ parables, “You can always build a bigger barn, right?”

The story of the Widow’s Mite in our Gospel from Mark this morning, is an example of someone declaring “enough is enough” financially, and thereby finding freedom. No doubt every resident of Jerusalem who knew this impoverished elderly widow worried on her behalf, thinking that she might not have enough to live on. In fact, the early verses of today’s Scripture lesson contain a critique by Jesus of the worldly temple authorities. In them he scolds the scribes who live an opulent lifestyle, strutting around in lavish robes and gorging themselves at banquets, even as “they devour widows’ houses.”

The story is seldom retold, in its full context, including that detail. Jesus has just remarked that no one should be forced to give until they are poor. Even Jesus himself, it seems, thinks the widow’s gift is too much, rather than enough. And yetIt’s her decision — her desire to give even if it leads to her to become destitute. No one — not even the scribes, in all likelihood — would have said this woman ought to give up the very last coins she had, placing herself in abject poverty. But she does it anyway. She does it of her own volition. And strange as it may seem to our own prudent, cautious selves, she decides that having nothing — absolutely nothing — is enough.

It literally isn’t enough, of course. That’s the irony. Jesus is brutally honest about that, as he tells the tale. Those mites, those tiny coins, are all this woman has to live on. By placing them in the temple collection-box, the widow makes a truly sacrificial gift. Because of her remarkable generosity, she guarantees she will **not**

have enough. She may literally die as a result. It's akin to a decision Jesus himself will soon make, just a few days later after he tells this parable.

In our narrative this morning, the Lord is teaching in the temple in relative peace, surrounded by his disciples. And yet, just a few days later, as Mark tells it, Jesus will experience a deep agony in the garden of gethsemane when in his anguish he will declare, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." A short time after that, he will be on the cross, crying out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and with one final cry he will breathe his last breathe." Can you hear the sound of Jesus' own mite falling into the collection-box?

The Stewardship Committee of a Pastor named Jack Stotts — in the early days of his ministry — was opening the envelopes that contained pledge cards they'd just received during their annual campaign. When they came to the card of a member named Mamie Cades, they were dismayed. It seemed the amount was far more than Mamie could afford. Mamie, as Reverend Jack described her years later, was a tall, homely woman who always wore threadbare dresses that looked to be decades old. She lived by herself in a house that was in terrible disrepair. Everyone assumed she was poor — which, by most definitions, she was.

"Somebody's got to talk with Mamie and tell her she can't afford this gift," one of the committee members announced. "She ought to keep the money. The church doesn't really need it, and she could use it to fix up her place. You go tell her, Pastor." With some trepidation, the young and inexperienced pastor set out to do just that. He arrived at Mamie's ramshackle house, and sat down in her parlor. He could hear the wind whistling through the cracks in her walls.

Stotts told Miss Cades (for he would never have dreamed of calling her by her first name at that exact place and time) of the Stewardship Committee's concern. A look of dismay washed over her face. "Would you take my joy away

from me?” she asked. It was a modern-day Widow’s Mite parable. It taught Stotts something valuable that informed his later work as the president of McCormick Theological Seminary, tasked with raising major gifts.

For residents of the United States, Thanksgiving Day will soon be upon us. It’s an excellent opportunity for us all to declare, “Enough is enough.” When we keep the holiday well, we look around us, count our blessings, and realize that, yes indeed, we have been blessed. But our possessions are not the source of our blessing. The source is in fact our relationship with a living, loving God who generously provides all that we need! What such a God gives us in life, in terms of material wealth, simply **has** to be enough.

Think about that for a moment. Really think about it! Would a God whose very nature is abundance give us anything less than enough? The spiritual challenge for us lies in meeting our generous God where God truly is — not where our own avarice, or greed, or desire may lead us.

The book of Revelation spins a colorful picture of a heavenly city that’s about as far removed from the widow’s mite as possible. This city — God’s city — is positively glittering with material wealth: “While the city is pure gold, clear as glass, the foundations of its jasper walls are adorned with every type of jewel. ... And contained within the walls are twelve gates made of pearl, and the streets of the city are paved with pure gold, transparent as glass.”

All that opulence and lavishness, though, is not really the point, because of the far-superior glory described in the verses that follow: “I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”

Of what value are streets of glittering gold and gates of shimmering pearl in a city lit by the glory of God? Maybe the widow with her mite imagined how she

would walk those golden streets one day soon, and how — even if she could have contrived to take that tiny coin with her — it would be utterly insignificant. To her, the only treasure worth pursuing is the glory of God. And that — for her and for us — most certainly *is* enough.

Let's consider one final way that enough may truly be enough as Thanksgiving approaches, it will be here in just a few weeks and it has nothing to do with money. For some of us, it may be true that there's a friend or family member with whom we've had a falling-out. Maybe we haven't spoken to a certain individual for a very long time. Or perhaps, when we *have* spoken, even the most innocent of conversations has quickly degenerated into an argument that has endlessly been replayed over and over again.

Maybe in a couple of weeks we're going to sit down for dinner with that person on Thanksgiving Day. Or, perhaps there's little to no chance that person will be there — although, by all rights, he or she really should be at that table. Whatever the case may be, there's still time between now and then for us to declare that enough is enough!

There's still time for us to just let it go, to let the other person have the satisfaction of winning the argument. Life is too short to allow envy, jealousy, anger, or feelings of personal woundedness to get in the way of showing our gratitude to God, whose very nature is abundance. So, in the days that follow, let us seek to declare that enough truly is enough. And may this move us toward a greater spirit of generosity.

Let us pray: Great Lord, you are the giver of every good and perfect gift. From the morning sun to the evening star, our days are measured by your indescribable generosity. We confess that we find it hard, at times, to be thankful. So easily we allow ourselves to be distracted: by greed, by pride, by desire. Teach us that contentment is not the result of what we have, but is, rather, the result of

what we believe: that we are your people, and the sheep of your pasture. In the name of Christ, we pray. **Amen.**