

Giving Your “Two Cents Worth”

Inspired by Mark 12:38-44

Over the course of the Regional Conference on Ending Hunger, Jacob said to his students, “Beware of the professionals, who like to go around in fancy clothing and accept special treatment at conferences and such. They expect seats of honor at seminars, churches, and retreats, and only attend banquets if they are a featured speaker and seated at the head table. They override others’ plans and procedures because they want things done their way. The walls of their offices are lined with degrees, certificates, and awards, and they are always at the ready to recite long dissertations on how to make the world a better place. But, that is where their role ends. They fully expect others to take action and roll up their sleeves to enter the dirty trenches of life and do the work with those on the margins of society.”

Jacob brought his top students to this Conference hosted at the University. These young men and women have a passion to make the world a better place. He wanted them to observe this event from the sidelines to see the realities of trying to inspire true change. They sat down at a quiet table on the side, away from the spotlight, and observed the crowds gathered that day. Many wealthy benefactors dressed in designer suits approached the donation tables and wrote checks with very large sums. A few even brought those “larger than life” display checks to be sure everyone could see their generous donations. All those zeroes for the poor helped clear their conscience as they slept in luxurious beds, soft as clouds, in safe, secure, warm, dry homes with full bellies, all the latest furnishings, and much more square footage than needed.

Jacob noticed an older woman slightly bent from years of pushing a broom in these very halls and in homes similar to the ones where these people reside. Jacob had gotten to know her, personally. Her name is Eloise. She has been a widow for more than twenty years now. She and her late husband had no college degrees and never had children, so she was truly alone in the world without much income to live on. Eloise knew suffering and hunger first hand. But, there was an air about her that didn’t make you pity her. You just knew she was OK. Her clothing wasn’t finery, but it was clean and hung neatly on her thin frame. Her hair was pulled back tightly in a bun so that she could see the world around her. And, one could see wisdom in her eyes. She was well aware of her surroundings and what was happening there.

Eloise passed through the crowd unnoticed. She saw the others though, and she heard them boasting of their wealth. She slowly made her way around the busy Donation Table. Another major donor was having his photo taken while presenting his “feel good” portion to the cause. Eloise approached the Volunteer Table which had no one waiting in line. Two young adults sat and watched the action in the room hoping someone would sign up to help implement the plans being funded here today. Behind them hung a simple sign that read, “Will you help us help them?”

Eloise stepped up and put her name at the top of the empty volunteer page. She spoke two small words that were worth more than all the eloquent speeches they had heard that day. “I will!” she said softly, giving her “two cents” for the cause. Calling his students into the hallway to be certain they could hear, Jacob said to them, “That is what brings true change. Eloise appears to be a poor widow who would be considered a recipient of this summit, rather than a donor. Yet, her contribution means more than those who have given mainly to increase their personal status and professional esteem. They can deliver a lot of money and still never feel a difference their own way of living. Eloise has a genuine connection to those in need. She will look directly into the eyes of hunger. She will hold the hands of pain. She will walk the path bringing about change, and will be changed herself. She contributed all she has and offers to the cause her time, her heart, her very life.

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