



# One Page Sermon

## By Pastor Robb McCoy

### February 18, 2024

### Justice is kindness in public

Recap of sermon from February 18, 2024

Scripture: Mark 12:38-44

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is one of the most famous teachings of Jesus. It is a foundational concept, found in Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12. “This is the Law and the prophets,” Jesus adds in Matthew, indicating that this is a way to summarize all of God’s teaching. In other words, kindness matters. How we treat others is an integral part of following Christ.

The Golden Rule, as it is known across cultures and other faiths, can be applied in many ways. This Lenten season we will be reading several stories of how Jesus treated others—mostly women.

This week we have a story that is not a direct interaction between Jesus and a woman, but instead an example of what kindness should look like in public. The story of the poor widow putting a couple of pennies in the Temple treasury is often known as “The widow’s mite.” The traditional reading of this story extols the virtue of the poor widow who is willing to give with such incredible trust. This is not, however, the point Jesus was making when he pointed her out.

She is described as a widow in “hopeless poverty.” Yet rich people are walking by her and throwing in “their spare change,” which implies that after they gave their money to the Temple, they still had money in their pockets. At the same time as they walk away with money in their pocket, a widow in hopeless poverty gives away her last. This is not about the virtue of the woman, it is about the brokenness of a value system that ignores the woman in need that is right in front of them. This is the opposite of “Doing unto others.”

The purpose of giving to the Temple was to make sure that widows like this one were cared for. The Temple treasury was the social safety net of the day, and it was clearly broken. And those who were giving money to

the treasury but walking by an actual person in need were missing the point of generosity.

Jesus is actually using the woman as an illustration of how broken the system was, not as an example of extraordinary generosity.

Her very existence—a widow in hopeless poverty—was a sign that the Temple was no longer bearing the fruit that it was intended to bear. Jesus had just warned of the legal experts who “devoured the homes of widows.” The legal experts were a part of Temple system that arbitrated cases of the Law, which often included property and inheritance cases that affected widows more than anyone else. In other words, they would give to the Temple to make sure everyone saw their ‘generosity’ but then worked in ways that further marginalized and impoverished the vulnerable.

Those who were ignoring the hopeless widow were ignoring the Golden Rule, even as they were giving money into the treasury. The legal experts were ignoring the Golden Rule were actually ignoring the very Law they were supposed to be enforcing.

“Do unto others,” is not just about being polite or catchy slogan and reminder to be nice. It is a call to righteousness as individuals and as a society. Righteousness is about doing unto others in public and as a people. It should be our guide in our relationships, but also in our society. The warnings Jesus gave to those who ignored the hopeless widow still apply. It should reveal how far we have to go to actually “Do unto others” in public.



**Next Week: The Second Sunday of Lent  
John 8:1-11, the woman caught in adultery**