

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Often, in the Gospels, the world seems to divide into two groups. There are the rich and powerful, who are often religiously arrogant, and there are the poor, downtrodden, and despised. Jesus is shatteringly hard on the first, and incredibly gracious to the second. He is on their side when no one else is; he accepts them where others judge and reject; he understands, he helps, he loves.

This wonderful graciousness is absolutely central to the Good News. Telling these stories to children, we instinctively lead them to identify with the characters who are poor and powerless. Children always identify with the “little guy” in a story, unless we give them strong clues not to: look at all the fairy tales where the hero is a Cinderella, or a neglected and abused youngest son. Children know their powerlessness. Even children who are secure and loved feel overwhelmed by the big world and, at times, unappreciated and misunderstood by the powerful adults in their lives. Children need stories that show the poor, the despised and the invisible, receiving acknowledgment and respect from someone whose opinion matters. We are right to tell today’s story in a way that is Good News to children. “See, the big people thought they were so smart. But it was the little person that Jesus praised.”

The problem comes only if we rest there. It is easy to sentimentalize a story like this one—to turn it into just a pat on the back, not only for the genuinely poor and powerless, and for the children, but for ourselves. We want to go on thinking of our-selves as the “little guy,” as we did when we were kids, because it means Jesus is on our side, accepting us, instead of calling us to repentance and responsibility. If the adults in our family are not in fact poor and downtrodden, then we owe it to our children to ask them to identify also with the rich in these stories. Is Jesus mad at the rich people? How, if at all, have they failed? What more could they have done? What does Jesus want us to do? Does our own family give just a little—so little it will hardly be missed—to God’s work? Do we think about these things at all, and share our concerns with our children? If not, what are we waiting for?

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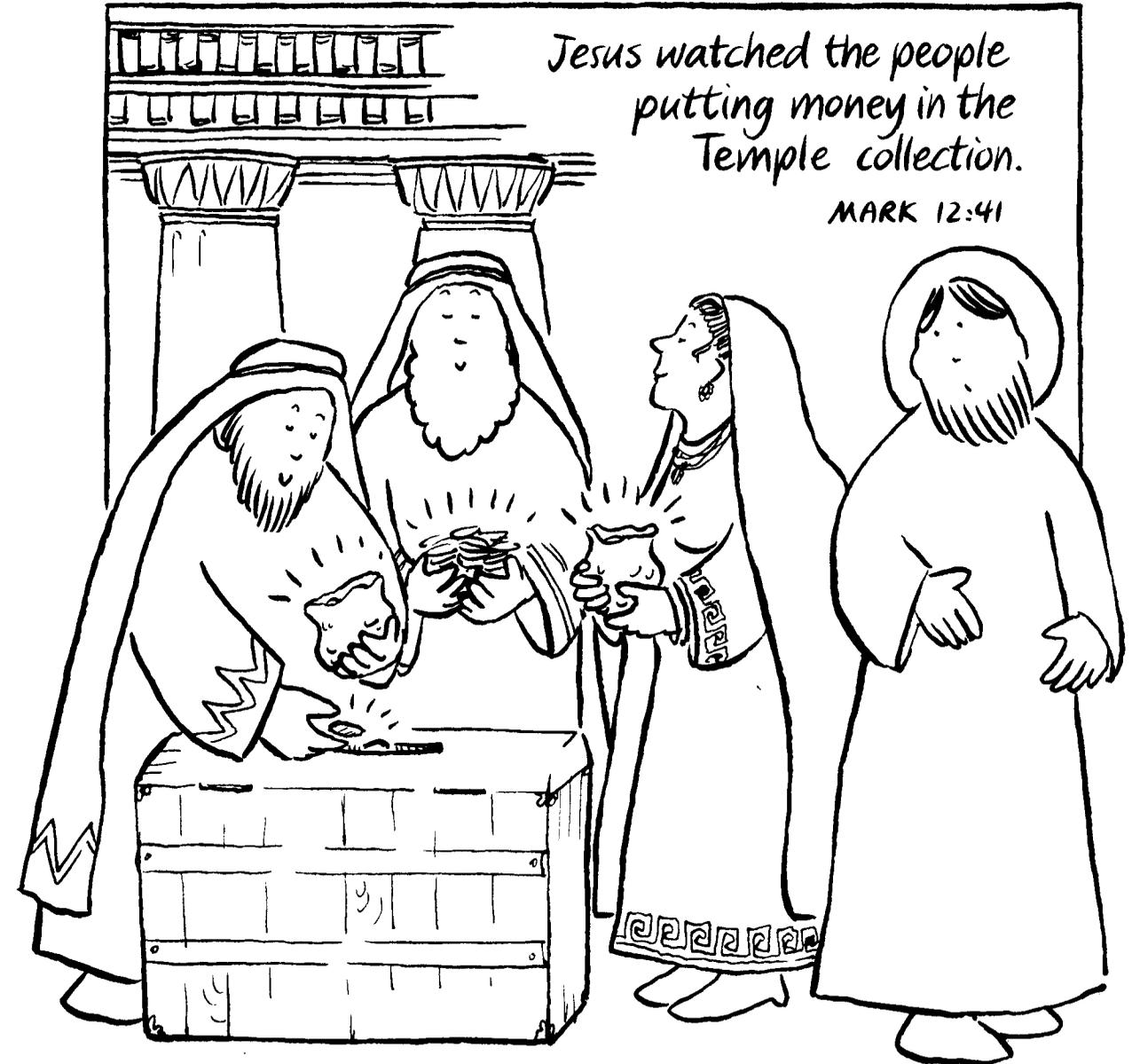
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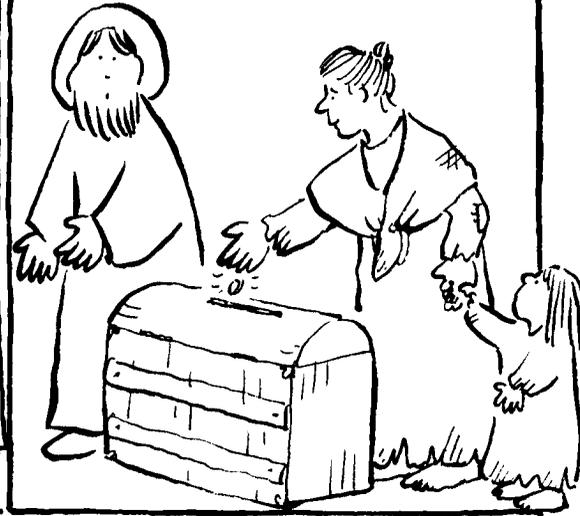
Year B
PROPER 27
TRACKS 1 and 2



Rich people put lots of money in the Temple collection.



A poor widow put in just one penny.



Jesus said, "She has put in more than they have." People said, "What do you mean? They put in so much, and she only put in one penny!"

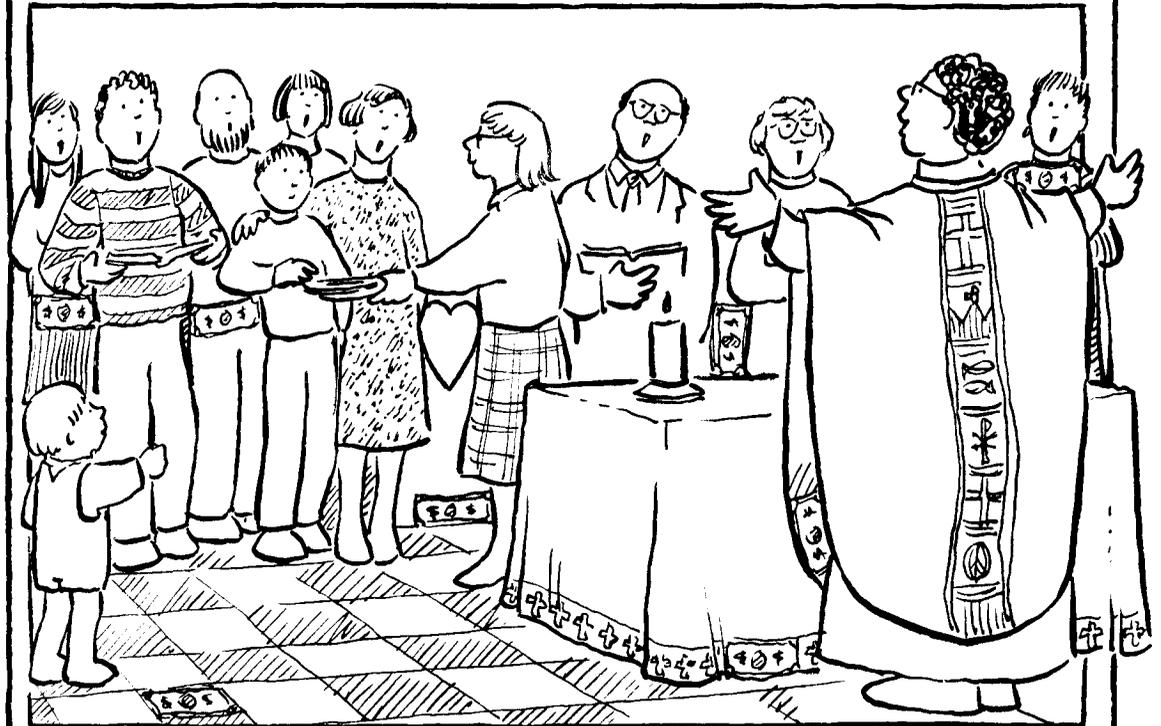


Jesus said, "They still have plenty of money and nice things. But she put in everything she had."



Jesus said it was easy for rich and powerful people to pray and do good deeds. They had plenty of time, and lots of money to give. They would still have everything they needed.

But it was not easy for the poor widow. She had nothing left over. She gave anyway, because she loved God.



In the picture, find the money for the people to give to God. Then find the special thing we can all give to God!