

The Widows Might

By: Elena Huegel of Global Ministries



"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." - Mark 12:42-44

I was invited to preach just outside the city of Juchitán, Oaxaca in an area where most of the residents are Zapotec people. Just three years ago, the services were adapted into Spanish from Zapotec because the new minister does not speak the ancient Mesoamerican language. Zapotec words, phrases, and songs spring from the hearts of the people in the congregation during the worship service like the little flowers decorating the auto repair and machine tool shop sanctuary. Clanging work continues in the background even as the service begins. The congregation meets here because the earthquake that struck the region destroyed their former place of worship.

Mary Katherine Ball, a Global Missions Intern on loan to the Institute for Intercultural Studies and Research (INESIN) while waiting her assignment in Ecuador, accompanies me past the rubble, to the solitary pillars of what is left of the church building. "The sisters and brothers worked so hard to have a simple, comfortable, worthy place to worship," the pastor says shaking his head. "Every single family in my congregation lost their home."

As I preach, three Zapotec matriarchs look on from the second row, their bright clothes trimmed with lace and long braids intertwined with ribbons. They nod in agreement and then weep openly as I remind them that we are the children of the High King, worthy princes and princesses, who treat others with dignity just as we expect and demand to be treated. "When you treat me with dignity, your own dignity is uplifted. When I treat you with dignity, my dignity is strengthened. Dignity is expressed and experienced in community."

At the end of the worship service, one of the matriarchs hands me an envelope for the work of INESIN. "Thank you for coming to visit us. This is our offering so that this work might bless others in need," she tells me as she gives me a hug.

Ten dollars. Three matriarchs. Widows? Houseless? Churchless? Worthy queens in the court of the High King! Again the widow's mite, becomes the widows' might, for nothing, not even a devastating earthquake can strip them of their dignity and their power to share that dignity with others!

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