

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

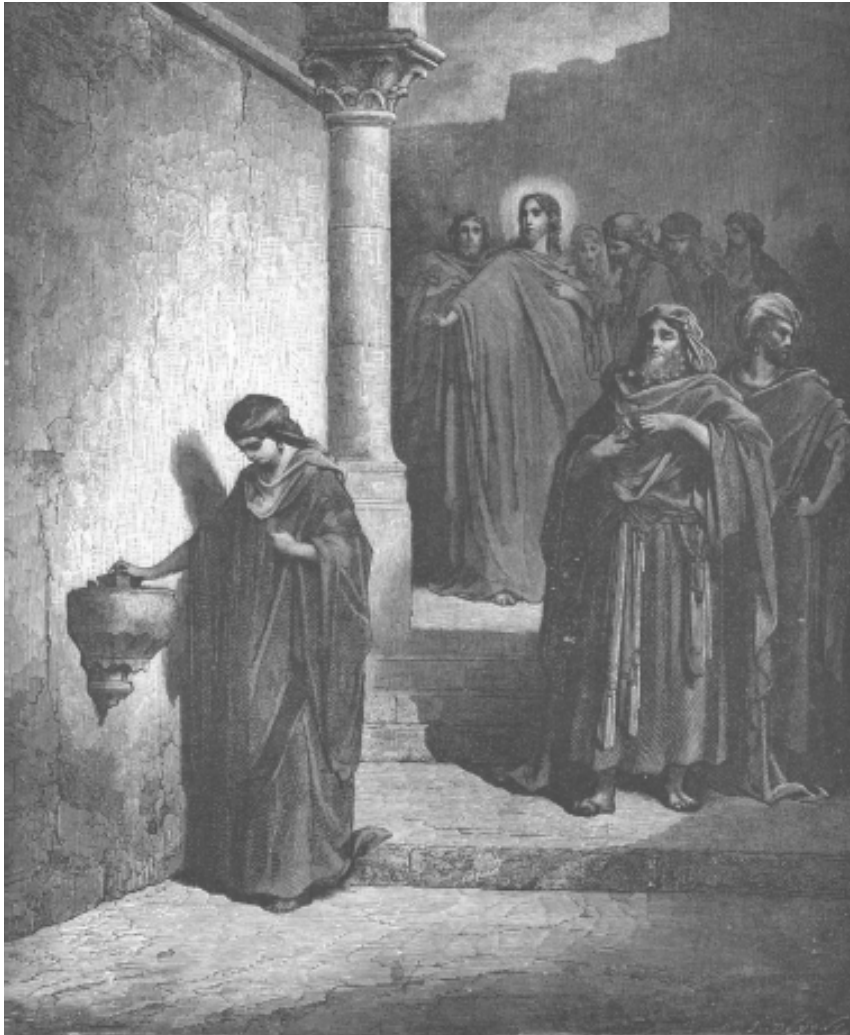


Illustration: The Widow's Mite

A Devotional for the
Week of the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

SUNDAY.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men.

– *Matthew 6:1.*

Alms, in the first place, are gifts of charity given out of pity for the needy. But also such collections as are raised in our churches and congregations for the extension of Christ's Kingdom outside of their own circle may be included here. Now, if the Lord Jesus says: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men," this first implies that we, His beloved Christians, should give alms. Love, which flows from faith, should impel us to give alms as our Lord would have us do. Hence, take heed that you give alms, and that you give commensurably with the respective need, and according to your ability, according to, the means the Lord has given you.

Furthermore the Lord here says that in giving alms we should take heed that we do it not before men, to be seen of them. We should not do as the hypocrites do, who cause a trumpet to be sounded before them in the churches and in the newspapers, that they may be honored by men. Truly, such people have their reward! They have what they paid for: the praise of men. They dare not look forward to the gracious reward in heaven promised by God to His children. Shall we be like those hypocrites?

Therefore, when you do alms, do it lovingly, with singleness of heart, and let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Let your alms be in secret! And your Father who sees in secret, and sees your love and compassion, the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, bud forth in you, will, out of great mercy, reward you openly, when that day comes on which He shall prove, by the works the Christians have done, that they had a living faith.

PRAYER. – Dear Heavenly Father, who has richly and abundantly bestowed on me, a poor sinner, all Your benefits and gifts of eternal mercy, help me by Your Holy Spirit that I may glorify Your mercy by likewise being merciful, and opening my heart and hand for the poor and needy in Your Kingdom. Amen.

Hymn 358, 2.

Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to yield Thee,
Gladly, freely of Thine own;
With the sunshine of Thy goodness
Melt our thankless hearts of stone;
Till our cold and selfish natures,
Warmed by Thee, at length believe
That more happy and more blessed
'Tis to give than to receive.

MONDAY.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor dust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
– Matthew 6:19-21.

Treasures on earth are extremely perishable and uncertain. Moths corrupt costly garments. Mold and rust destroy palaces. Thieves, especially those great thieves called financiers and money-men, devise very shrewd plans to get other people's money and goods. Moreover, your life on this earth, O Christian, is very short and always uncertain. Treasures in heaven are absolutely imperishable and certain. Jesus' blood and righteousness, the glorious dress wherein you may stand before God, is ever new and good. The mansions in the Father's house, where Jesus has prepared a place for us, stand firm forever. The things God has placed to your credit are unquestionably safe, and no one can take them from you.

Moreover, your life in heaven, O Christian, is eternal. O Christian, hear what your Savior says! Seek not, nor lay up, treasures on earth, but seek and lay up treasures in heaven. For

where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If you consider earthly things desirable treasures, your heart will be earthly-minded, and saving faith will die within you. If you consider heavenly things treasures to be desired, your heart will be heavenly-minded, and saving faith will gain ever more strength. Now choose, my dear Christian, where you would lay up treasures.

PRAYER. – I will lay up treasures in heaven, Lord Jesus! I will lay up those treasures which You, by grace, already have given to me and ever will do so. O Lord Jesus, open my eyes by Your Holy Spirit, that I may know that which is of true value, and desire the eternal treasures of Your grace! And rid me, O Jesus, of the earthly-mindedness of my depraved and benighted flesh! Amen.

Hymn 363, 3.

Shall I weary me with fretting
O'er vain trifles, and regretting
Things that never can remain?
I will strive but that to win me
Which can shed true rest within me, –
Rest the world must seek in vain.

TUESDAY.

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithall shall we be clothed?
– Matthew 6:31.

I will lay up treasures in heaven, Lord Jesus! I will lay up those treasures which You by grace already have given to me and ever will do so. O Lord Jesus, open my eyes by Your Holy Spirit, that I may know that which is of true value, and desire the eternal treasures of Your grace! And rid me, O Jesus, of the earthly-mindedness of my depraved and benighted flesh!

Why should we take no thought and say: "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Because we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve God and mammon. We cannot be God's dear children and at the same time wish for mammon as anxiously as if it were our god. Just because God is our Father through Jesus Christ, our Savior, we should not anxiously take thought for our food and drink and raiment. Will not our Father, who has given us our life and our body, also provide food and raiment? Will not He, who feeds the fowls of the air and clothes the flowers of the field, do this all the more for us, His children? O we of little faith!

The Gentiles, who do not know God as we know Him, who are without God in the world, who are not the children of God, may indeed worry and say; "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But not we children of God. For our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things. And knowing this, He also gives us these things.

There is only one thing about which we should be concerned, only one thing we should anxiously seek; it is this, that we may remain God's dear children and live and conduct ourselves as God's dear children; then our food and drink and raiment will surely be added unto us. All this is promised us by our Lord and Savior, whose lips speak nothing but the truth. And He says in great kindness: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow ; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:24-34.) Therefore take no thought, saying: "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

PRAYER. – Great and omnipotent God, You are my dear Father through Jesus Christ, my Savior, and I am Your dear child, whom You love with a boundless love. Give to me Your Holy Spirit, that I may always firmly believe this wondrous truth. And grant me to fully and cheerfully trust in You in life and death. And root out of my heart all anxious cares for food and drink and raiment unbecoming Your children. Amen.

Hymn 363, 1. 2.

ALL depends on our possessing
God's free love and grace and blessing,
Though all earthly wealth depart;
He who God for his hath taken
'Mid the changing world unshaken
Keeps a free, heroic heart.

He who hitherto hath fed me,
And to many a joy hath led me,
Is and shall be ever mine;
He who did so gently school me,
He who still doth guide and rule me,
Will not leave me now to pine.

WEDNESDAY.

Judge not! – Matthew 7:1.

To judge means to form an opinion of a fellow-man, and to pass judgment on him according to the strict requirements of the law.

My dear Christian, would *you* like to have others treat you thus? Are you so utterly without sin as to be able to say to every man: "Judge me!" and to God: "judge me!"? Nevermore! say you. Very well; then you must neither judge your neighbor, in order that you will not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you measure it out, it shall be measured to you again.

If, with respect to your fellow-man, you step out of the sphere of compassion into which the grace of God in Christ has placed you and your fellow-man, and if you enter the sphere of the strict requirements of God's Law and judge your fellow-man according to

it, then the Law will hold its strict requirements up to you and judge you.

Beware, beware! Judge not! If you judge your fellow-man, you art like a man who beholds a speck in his brother's eye and says: "Let me pull the speck out of your eye!" and, behold, a beam is in his own eye. What beam, then, is in your own eye? The beam of hypocrisy. What hypocrisy? This hypocrisy, that, though being a sinner a thousand-fold yourself, you undertake to judge your neighbor for this or that sin. Will not the judgment of God smite you? Listen! If you behold a speck in your brother's eye, then beware, above all things, of the beam of hypocritical judgment, and then help, with the sincere humility of a poor sinner, to cast the speck out of your brother's eye.

Always remain within the sphere of the grace and compassion of God.

PRAYER. – My God, how depraved am I, how sin does cleave to me! I, who have burdened myself with guilt a thousand-fold, am so easily inclined to judge my brother and neighbor. O God, for Jesus' sake forgive me this wickedness of my heart, and grant me grace through Your Holy Spirit above all things, in true penitence, to see my own sins, and thereupon to help my erring brother in a spirit of true humility. Amen.

Hymn 346, 3.

O let me never speak
 What bounds of truth exceedeth:
Grant that no idle word
 From out my mouth proceedeth;
And grant, when in my place
 I must and ought to speak,
My words due power and grace,
 Nor let me wound the weak.

THURSDAY.

Enter ye in at the strait gate! – Matthew 7:13.

Our Lord and Savior says: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there be that go in thereat."

Why is this?

Because the way to damnation, that is, unbelief and a life of sin, is so suitable, agreeable, and pleasing to our depraved nature, and hence wide, broad, and smooth. And "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it." Why is this? Is God at fault here? Does God make it so hard for us to be saved? No, God makes it easy for us to be saved. God desires to make us lost and condemned sinners righteous before Him without any merit, or work, or anything whatsoever on our part, solely by virtue of the merit and work of Christ, our Substitute, which we should accept by faith. Hence it is His great mercy that saves us, grace alone. And what is more, He even tenderly urges us through His Word and His Holy Spirit to go this way that leads to salvation by grace.

But, according to our old Adam, we foolishly block this way, this gate of grace. To our old Adam the Gospel of Christ is foolishness and a stumbling-block; our old Adam refuses to believe in Christ; he refuses to put his trust in the righteousness of another and in the merit of another; he refuses to be a child of God; he refuses to follow Christ. – The way which God has made even, the gate which God has opened, is too strait, too narrow, too disagreeable, too annoying. yea, repulsive to him.

But "enter ye in at the strait gate," Christians! Deny yourselves, depart from the broad way, go the narrow way that leads to life! "Enter ye in at the strait gate!"

PRAYER. – Lord, I call on You in the trouble which my own wicked heart has brought on me, because it takes no pleasure in the way of grace which You have opened and prepared for me with the

blood of Christ. Break the fetters with which sin has shackled me! O God of mercy, set my heart free by Your Holy Spirit, and lead me, Your child, in the way of life, and let me enter in at the strait gate of eternal bliss. Amen.

Hymn 344, 7.

O guide and lead me, Lord,
While here below I wander;
Grant that I follow Thee,
My Guide, and my Commander.
For if I lead myself,
I soon am led astray,
But if Thou ledest me,
I do my duty aye.

FRIDAY.

Beware of false prophets! – Matthew 7:15.

Of the salvation which is in Christ we know nothing, nothing at all, except what God's Word tells us. And this salvation does not become our own except through this Word. Hence this Word is the only means through which God reveals, and also gives, salvation to us. It is the only light in the darkness of death through which we must pass, the only remedy for the ravages of death. How highly we should prize this Word! How anxiously we should be concerned about having this Word preached to us and taught to us in its truth and purity, unadulterated and unabridged.

Therefore our Savior said: "Beware of false prophets!" By false prophets not those preachers are meant that manifestly preach barren infidelity; on the contrary, such preachers as "come to you in sheep's clothing," those who pretend to be Christian preachers, and perhaps put on very holy and pious airs, but who adulterate the Word of God, and teach doctrines that are not wholesome, but pernicious and disastrous to the soul. False prophets are especially those who teach the people to build their hope of salvation on their own works, their

own doing and conduct, and not solely on the grace of God in Christ revealed and offered us to us in His Word.

Concerning these specious deceivers the Savior says: "Inwardly they are ravening wolves." They destroy faith and salvation. And the world is full of such false prophets. Most pulpits are filled by them. "Beware of false prophets!" How shall we know them? "Ye shall know them by their fruits," says the Lord. By what fruits? Their teaching. Watch their *doctrine*, not their name and demeanor; then you will know what they are – but, mark well! provided you yourself know God's saving Word.

PRAYER. – My God, my God, let us keep Your wholesome Word, which, out of great mercy, You have given to us! Guard us against false prophets! Do not let them lead us away from the sweet comfort true faith gives us. Grant us grace to test all preachers with regard to their doctrine, whether they are proclaiming Your Word. Let us follow Your admonition, and carefully guard against false prophets. Truly, it concerns eternal salvation, both our own and that of our loved ones, O Lord! Amen.

Hymn 408, 1.

LET me be Thine forever,
Thou faithful God and Lord;
Let me forsake Thee never
Nor wander from Thy Word;
Lord, do not let me waver,
But give me steadfastness,
And for such grace forever
Thy holy name I'll bless.

SATURDAY.

Not every one that saith unto me: Lord, Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. – Matthew 7:21.

In the Christian Church there are people who call Jesus their Lord and Savior, who call themselves disciples of Jesus and children of God, yes, who may even consider the Gospel to be the truth, and, moreover, display zeal for the cause of the kingdom of God, and yet they do not do, they refuse to do, the will of God declared in His holy Law. Yes, there are those who preach and teach the Gospel and the doctrine of Christ in its truth and purity, with great power and eloquence, diligently and indefatigably, who defend the same, convert others and convince them of the truth, and do wonderful works in the kingdom of God, and accomplish many things, and nevertheless are carnal-minded and disobedient to God.

Let us remember that the saving power of God is not vested in the person of the preacher, but in the grace of God which is effective through the Word that is preached. Now, Christian, note this! All such people shall not enter into the kingdom of God. Our Lord and Savior has never recognized them as His own, He does not now recognize them as such, and He will not do so on the day of Judgment. They are workers of iniquity; they must depart from Jesus.

For how does the matter stand? Jesus receives sinners. We are made righteous before God and saved, not by virtue of our work, doing, conduct, or merit, but solely through the merit of Christ, which we accept by faith. But whoever does this, and thus has become righteous before God, a child of God, and an heir of salvation, is so minded now that he delights in doing the will of God. Hence, whoever does not want to do the will of God is devoid of true faith.

Thus you will understand our Lord when He says: "Not every one that saith unto me: Lord, Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Now take a good lesson from this.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, give to me, a poor sinner, Your Holy Spirit, that I may derive true comfort trusting in Your merit, and rejoice and glory in the fact that by grace I am God's dear child, and, in view of this, do the will of God willingly, yes, gladly, as much as Your grace gives me power to do. And acknowledge me as Your own, O my Lord and Savior, here in time and thereafter in eternity. Amen.

Hymn 314, 10.

From faith in Christ, whene'er 'tis right,
Good works are surely flowing;
The faith is dead that shuns the light,
No good works ever showing:
By faith alone the just shall live,
Good works alone the proof can give
Of love, which true faith worketh.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
The hymn stanzas are from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1918).
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