

## GIVE IT ALL YOU'VE GOT

When I was in college I was in Naval ROTC for a while. I loved it, but I eventually dropped out for reasons that I won't go into right now. Now, I enjoyed being in ROTC, but I struggled with the physical fitness requirements. I have never been much of an athlete, and I didn't enjoy exercising. So, I was required to take physical training. Our Commanding Officer felt that the entire training battalion should be trained to the Marine Corps Standard, and they let marines conduct the training.

Now, I did fine with most of the training, but the big problem I had was the running. We were required to run 3 miles. I didn't have much endurance, and I have a short stride so, I never was able to finish in time. Invariably, I would stop and walk. I just couldn't run the entire distance.

Every two weeks we would do a PT test. The course was one and one-half miles long and we ran two laps. One day I was running a test, I finished my first lap and someone fell in to run beside me. I didn't know who he was, but he fell in and started talking to me. He said, "The instructors are telling me that you have the most ability of anyone out here, but you keep coming up short." So, I told him, "I just don't have the wind." He then started explaining to me what I needed to do.

Now, I didn't know who this guy was. I really was kind of wishing he would go away, but he didn't, and he wouldn't let me quit. Because I didn't quit two things happened. I was able to run the course in time to qualify. More importantly, I found enough confidence in myself to *believe* that I could do it. All it took was gaining enough belief in myself. Once I discovered that, I gave it everything I had. The result was success.

In our passage today, Jesus was teaching and saying, "Beware of the scribes who walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the marketplaces and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, who devour widow's houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."

This points to a problem in the human condition. Perhaps the most widely renowned theologian in Church History was St. Augustine. According to Augustine, the original sin was pride. By that I think he meant claiming a superior station for oneself as opposed to others. It's as if life is one big competition, and some people deserve a better place than others. Of course, it stands to reason, that we're the ones who deserve to be on top.

Now, I have heard some theologians dispute that. That said, certainly this passage seems to support the notion that pride is a sin. Yes, God granted some of us with gifts that others didn't receive. That doesn't make us more special. That doesn't mean we deserve or have earned more than others. According to Augustine, it's sinful for us to think otherwise. God didn't create some of us better than others. God didn't create some humans more important than others. God views us all the same.

Jesus goes on to sit down next to the treasury and observe how the people were donating money into the treasury. The scripture says that many rich people were putting in large sums. The implication here is that the rich people wanted to be noticed. They wanted to be seen as generous. They wanted to be seen as righteous.

But then a poor widow came forward and put two coins into the treasury. Jesus pointed this woman out to the disciples and said, "Truly I tell you this woman gave more than all the others, for they all gave out of their surplus, but she gave everything that she had."

Now, it would be easy to conclude that this is about money. This is about how much a person puts into the plate. I think the meaning here goes deeper. It's not just about giving all the material possessions one has. It's about giving *everything* one has to God. How many of us can truly say that we do that?

How many of us can say that we've put everything we had into spreading the good news that Jesus saves? How many of us can say that we put everything we have into loving our neighbor? How many of us can say that we put everything we have into the mission of the church? How many of us can say that we put everything we have into making disciples for Jesus Christ? How much effort do we put into things that are not in the gospel? Even when we're at church, we are often putting a lot of energy into things that Jesus never asked us to do.

This passage isn't really about money. It's about giving God everything you have. Now, I know that can be discouraging, because the results can be intangible. We don't always see the fruit of our labor, and when we do, we don't always see it immediately. But think about how long Jesus has been patient with us- he's waiting 2000 years for us to follow him. Think also about this: How much did Jesus Christ give up for us? He left his home. He gave up all his possessions. He left his family. He left his friends. He moved away from his home town. He had a career as a carpenter waiting for him; he gave up that job. He was subjected to ridicule. Eventually, he even gave up his life. He gave the best of everything that he had, and he did that for no other reason than he loved us. What we have we sacrificed for him lately?

I liken it to joining a gym. If I join a gym and pay them that's good for the gym. But if I never go and use the machines, I will never get any stronger, never get any faster, never get any healthier, and never build any endurance.

Folks, we need to rethink the way we do faith. Instead of demanding the very best of everything for ourselves, I think it's high time we start giving the very best of everything we have to the Lord. You may not believe that will accomplish much. But I have living proof of what a little faith can do. That young man that day gave me a little faith in myself. Just imagine what we could do with a little faith in Jesus. Jesus said we could move mountains if we just had the faith of a mustard seed.

