

When I was young I learned that to honor God I should honor the one who was God's servant, ordained to preach God's word.

Reverend Lucht we always called him. Reverend - it comes from revered, honored, treasured. In honoring him, we honored God.

When I was young I learned how one dressed when one went to church. We put on our Sunday best, our very finest clothes. I honored God by what I wore.

When I was young I learned to honor God by my behavior in God's house. No running, no shouting there. No angry words to be spoken there but gentle, peace-filled words.

I think, maybe Jesus was taught the very same things when he was young. Honor God's servants, honor God's house in every way.

But Jesus did not simply pass on the old ways of thinking and doing. Jesus watched, observed. He thought about God and human actions and then he spoke. Like this he spoke: "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance they say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

Scribes. Professional God people - like Reverend Lucht. Like me. You show your respect for God in honoring people like me. You treat me differently than you treat others. Just as the people in Jesus' day treated the scribes.

Sometimes it can go to my head. Sometimes I pray a prayer with more thought of what you are going to think of that prayer than thought about God. Can you believe that? Just think how God is mocked if I pray a prayer to be heard by you rather than to be heard by God. Jesus said that

is what happened to the scribes too. It got to be a habit with them. He said God would not be mocked in that way.

Sometimes I can think that what you give to the church is more important than anything else. Can you believe it? Sometimes I have asked people who hardly have a minute to spend with their own children to do more and more for the church. Fix food. Be on a committee. Wash windows or pull weeds. Jesus talked of the religious leaders devouring widows houses. He meant that the leaders wanted more and more for themselves and the temple, forgetting the day to day needs of God's children.

Sometimes when people honor me in showing their love for God, I get fooled that think you are honoring me because I deserve the honor. I start to think because I work hard you should be forever grateful, forgetting that all of you work hard in your work too. Jesus saw that a long time ago, religious leaders who liked to be greeted with respect, and to have places of honor at banquets. Jesus thought there was a better way to honor God.

There is a hint in what happens next. People are putting their offerings into the treasury. Many put in large sums just as many of you do here. And a poor widow put in the last two coins she had left. Jesus said her offering was larger than all the rest.

What do you think? Does God need her two coins, is that what JEsus is saying? No.

Jesus next words show that God does not even need the temple.

As he came out of the temple one of his disciples said to him, Look teacher, what large stones and what large buildings! JEsus said, do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another, all will be thrown down.

You want to honor God? How can you do it? By honoring me? By honoring this place by your clothing, your behavior, your offerings?

No. If you really want to honor God honor that poor widow. Honor the young ^{parent} ~~father~~ who is exhausted by the demands of job and helping at home. the young mother who comes here to pray for God's guidance in all she does. Honor the the woman whose husband is failing. Honor the child whose ^{parent} ~~father~~ has died. God is not honored by our buildings, and fancy religious dress. That widow who put her last two cents in the offering, who would take her home and give her shelter and food? Who would wait and watch with her through sickness? Who would honor her as if she was thier mother, their daughter?

We are beginning a lot of talk around here about programs, and our building. Many would like us to become a great church. But ~~I~~ ^{am} sure this is ^{not} what God wants for us.

God wants us to serve. If we build someday, let it be so that there would be space to study God's word and care for children, and that the grieving might meet together to help one another. Not so that we would have a building to be proud of but that God's children might be cared for, especially God's little ones, the stranger, the weak, the poor.

Show honor and respect for the very ones that you are most tempted to dishonor, disrespect. No one gave that widow any notice that day but JESUS. He so honored her that he became just like her, giving all that he had to God, offering his own life. Jesus did not seek to be like the honored and wealthy but for you became the spit upon one, and the mocked one and the pleading to God one.

I don't know why it is so hard to learn from Jesus, to follow him. I can't imagine why Christians have honored buildings and preachers more than the poor.

But I know that even this building will one day be no more. And the poor who believe in Jesus shall be alive in him forevermore. *When everyone of us is ~~to a~~ poorer than that poor widow, stripped of everything by death, we will still have Jesus, Forever.*
I pray that you and I will be too.