

These readings are about exercising prudence in Christian charity. Although the Lectionary does not use the widow's mite in these readings, both Mark (Mark 12:1-2) and Luke (Luke 21:5-6) portray the widow giving everything she has, her *widow's mite*, to the temple, as a misguided waste. That, at least, is one opinion.¹ The temple is about to be destroyed. These readings are profoundly about the virtue of prudence, that virtue that balances the other virtues, one with the others.

Malachi 3:19-20a

John the Baptizer may have preached this passage from Malachi in the context of making straight the way of the Lord.² Malachi proclaims *evildoers will be stubble*. Malachi means doing good, loving, is the opposite of stubble and does lead somewhere.

Malachi goes on to preach about *the sun of justice with its healing rays*. When people are miraculously healed, they frequently speak of healing warmth. The road to virtue is one of warmth and healing. The temple focus of these readings is the souls of the Faithful. The idea is to take the command to love one another seriously, while sticking to the road of righteousness.

Love is appropriately associated with material goods. It is one thing, nevertheless, to follow the money when trying to follow church politics; it is something else to pretend that crass materialism is all there is to church politics. God himself and love are also involved. The road to perdition goes the opposite direction to the road to salvation.

Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9 (cf. 9)

The Lectionary uses Psalm 98, an Enthronement Psalm, at the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 10, 2004, in these Notes. The Lectionary used Psalm 98, therefore, about a month ago. The comparison is as follows:

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>verses</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
56B	422	1, 2-3, 3-4, (cf. 2b)	Easter 6
144C	901	1, 2-3, 3-4, (cf. 2b)	Ordinary 28
159C	969	5-6, 7-8, 9 (cf. 9)	Today

The difference in the Responsorial is that for today, *The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice*, whereas for October 10, and Easter, *The Lord has revealed to the nations his*

¹ Addison G. Wright, S.S., "The Widow's Mites: Praise or Lament?—A Matter of Context," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 2 (April 1982) 263.

² Benedict T. Viviano, O.P., "The Least in the Kingdom: Matthew 11:11, Its Parallel in Luke 7:28 (Q), and Daniel 4:14," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 41.

saving power. Today is apocalyptic; October 10 was prophetic. Psalm 98 is ancient, dating from the time of the monarchy.³

In the prophetic version the Lectionary used earlier, Faithfulness requires more than observation, but also commitment. If anything, Malachi and John the Baptizer were committed. The earlier section of Psalm 98 expresses prophetic gratitude for deliverance.⁴ The apocalyptic verses, used today, are stronger and more insistent. Justice is not to be played with. In accord with Joel 3:12, Psalm 98:9 is about the coming judgment of the nations, as expressed in the Responsorial antiphon.⁵

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Verse 10, *if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat*, Paul is serious. Paul is virile. Paul will not tolerate being taken unfair advantage of, wanting busy bodies *to eat their own food* (verse 12).

Luke 21:28

Standing erect and raising your heads is a proud, rather than a humble, posture. Can one be humble of heart without looking like a wuss or wimp? Luke thinks so, *because your redemption is at hand*. Luke, throughout his Gospel, looks forward to a reversal of fortunes.

Luke 21:5-19

People are standing around, admiring the Temple at Jerusalem in verse 1. Jesus then predicts the destruction of the Temple (Luke 21:5-7), in contrast to the comparable passage in Mark (Mark 13:1-4) where Jesus twice physically distances himself from the Temple. Mark insinuates apocalyptic opposition between Jesus and the Temple; whereas Luke simply prophesies what will happen.⁶ The distinction is similar to the different passages chosen from Psalm 98 between readings 56B and 144C versus 159C.

³ J. J. M. Roberts, "The Enthronement of Yhwh and David: The Abiding Theological Significance of the Kingship Language of the Psalms," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2002) 677.

⁴ Verse 1. Sue Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 472.

⁵ Sue Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002) 474.

⁶ Francis D. Weinert, "Luke, the Temple and Jesus' Saying about Jerusalem's Abandoned House (Luke 13:34-35)", the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 1 (January 1982) 70.

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Luke is prophesying that all the care given to the Temple will come to nothing because of rejection of salvation through Jesus. The analogy applies to the souls of the Faithful. Rejection of salvation through Jesus means prophetic destruction of souls.

Verse 7 contains one of the 152 questions in Luke. In this case, Luke strengthens the Marcan relationship between the destruction of the Temple between Luke 21:6 and the question about when the destruction would happen in verse 7. In Luke, Jesus explains why he prophesies the destruction. The destruction will come because he is rejected.⁷

In Luke 21:8, Jesus proclaims that he is the Messiah and that the Faithful should not be deceived by others making a claim to Messiahship. Matthew 24:5 supplies "the Christ."⁸ Jesus goes on to prophecy that the Faithful will suffer to give witness to their Faith. Jesus himself will provide the wisdom required for justification (verse 15); the Faithful need not worry about providing for their own defense (verse 14). On the one hand, Jesus says *they will put some of you to death* (verse 16); on the other hand, two verses later Jesus says *not a hair on your head will be destroyed* (verse 18). Verse 16 is apocalyptic, verse 18 prophetic. Prudence requires an apocalyptic commitment of death to self with a prophetic expectation of not even a hair of the head endangered.

These readings begin with Malachi and Psalm 98 warning that God will come with justice and judgment. 2 Thessalonians prudentially insists that work is required and that those who do not work ought not to eat. Finally, the Gospel is about the beauty of the Temple being a false beauty, destined for destruction without the saving grace of Jesus. The widow's mite suits a context of prudential judgment between apocalyptic destruction and prophetic saving grace.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

⁷ Paul Elbert, "An Observation on Luke's Composition and Narrative Style of Questions," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2004) 100, 102, 106.

⁸ Edwin D. Freed, "*Ego Eimi* in John 1:20 and 4:25," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1979) 290.