

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

10/10/10 Offering and Donation Luke 21: 1-4

A few times a year, many of us get a letter from the colleges we attended, asking for money for annual fund raising. Those who send their donations often do so somewhat grudgingly. The alumni office ranks those donors according to the amounts of money they give. This is called a donation.

An offering is different. The episode of a poor widow, which was read earlier in the service, would clarify the meaning of offering for us.

Jesus sees a poor widow putting two small coins into the offering box at the temple. Jesus says to his disciples, "This poor woman has put in more than all the others, because she gave everything she had." In Jesus' eyes, the two copper coins exceed in value the much larger gifts of the wealthy.

An offering is our gift to God. It is given joyfully and lovingly, not hesitantly and grudgingly. There is no ranking according to the amounts of money we give. Small coins may be more worthy than a thousand dollars if they are offered as a genuine expression of our true gratitude to God.

I may have told you before one of my fondest childhood memories that stays with me even today. Allow me to tell you again, because it fits neatly with what I am talking about.

When I was three, my mother became ill. Her sister raised me for two years. I loved my aunt as much as I loved my mother. When I was five, my mother and I moved from Tokyo to Nagano prefecture in order to escape the air raids that were destroying the city.

One of my fondest memories in those years is my aunt's visit with us in the village. She traveled all the way from Tokyo in a crowded train just to see us.

To prepare for her coming, I stopped eating rice for a week. I stopped eating my favorite vegetables like corn and green beans and tomatoes. They were all for my aunt. I saved them for her.

An offering is not a chore as a donation may be. It is a choice we make for the glory of God. It is an act of thanksgiving to God. It is an expression of our gratitude for his love.

It is the wayward sheep's way of saying "Thank you, thank you" to the shepherd who picks it up on his shoulder and returns it home.

Thanks be to God.