**Vartanants and The Widow’s Offering**

 *Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box,****2****and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.****3****And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.****4****For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.” (Luke 21:1-4, ESV)*

 **“Your sword, our necks.” – “This poor widow has put in more than all of them.”**

 We, as Christ’s followers, are called to live sacrificially and generously by following the example of the Vartanants event and the Widow’s offering.

 Greetings to you on this Vartanants Sunday as we speak about sacrifice. God showed Jesus’ disciples a poor widow’s conduct, so that would be clear on the call of giving from the heart. In addition, given that today we are also commemorating Vartanants, it is obvious that these two examples show us an important lifestyle or stance to have as Christians. Therefore, today we’re going to talk about the lifestyle of generous sacrifice. Again, we as Christ’s followers are called to live sacrificially and generously by following the example of the Vartanants event and the Widow’s offering.

 Our spiritual life is called to be lived out in generosity and sacrifice. God saw fit that a strange event occur exactly in front of Jesus and His disciples. A poor woman put a few coins in the offering box and went on. The other rich people, however, who came and gave their offerings, were evil or deficient in the eyes of the Lord. Similarly, God saw fit that in the year 451AD, the relatively poorer Armenian nation, with its “few coins” of a general and His comrades, prepared to give it all by taking Communion before entering the battlefield. To a simple historian, the Vartanants battle was an embarrassing defeat, just as the widow’s offering was an obscure and perhaps painfully given offering to God. Here, however, was when Jesus praised the widow and criticized the miserly rich folks. It was also in this type of situation that Vartan won the crown of martyrdom for Christ, thus opening the path for continued struggle and an eventual peace, through the treaty of Nvarsag many years later.

 Giving sacrificially appears to be a rather strange activity. For example, the Lord Jesus’ sacrifice was a very painful one. He suffered of His own will, experienced pain of His own will, and voluntarily bore the excruciating burden of humanity’s sins on His shoulders. Any time that a deed is done sacrificially, there is a giving away of time, energy or even health. When a building is going to be built, it is not possible for the worker to seek out rest if there’s a deadline to be met for the project. When a doctor has an overnight shift at the hospital, they cannot say that they don’t feel like it or that they need to sleep or that they are unable to fulfill their task. When a soldier as tasked with standing watch at night, he or she cannot be careless and fall asleep. Otherwise, the enemy may sneak past the intended border, and many including the guard may lose their lives.

 Similarly, as believers, we are called to live our faith-walks out sacrificially. Our time, talents and treasure have been called by the Lord to be used for service. If you happen to give your small amount and it is sacrificial, then you did what the poor widow or General Vartan did, giving more than they could out of their heart. If you sacrifice your time, yes, that is a valid sacrifice and you will never have that time back, but you did it for the Lord. If you sacrifice your talents and use them for God’s service and ministry, yes, it may be that another use for those abilities would have been more beneficial for you, but you decided to give the Lord the best of your abilities, just like the widow, instead of sacrificing them on the altars of stinginess and selfishness.

 In a word, you (as a Christian) are called to sacrifice your life for the Lord and His purposes. If the disciples gave it all, then you are also called to sacrificially employ your possessions, your products, your earnings, and your learned lessons all for the Lord, for His glory (for His good reputation).

 If General Vartan sacrificed all, you are also called to give similarly. Give abundantly, give with your heart, give without counting how much your will receive back.

 May God give each of us a giving heart, that we may learn through these two examples above to give for His glory, and to show God’s generosity through our own.

 May the Lord Bless you all. Amen.