

## Two Good Women

**Intro.** Have you received any recent calls that the warranty on your car is about to expire? How about emails or texts from your pastor asking for gift cards? By now we know they and many others are phony. Clearly, scams against people of all ages are not a new thing. The Lord exposed some of the fraud that was common to some scribes of his time and contrasted it with the humility and generosity of the woman in the temple.

**I.** The characterization of scribes could not be more different from the one we heard in last week's gospel. He was genuine and open to a respectful dialogue. The Lord experienced hostility with most others. The usual complaints about arrogance the Lord upgraded to accusations of crimes of stealing and fraud. Local courts often appointed scribes as

representatives for the most defenseless people of that time: women whose husbands died, leaving them without a way to support themselves. There was also great competition among scribes for such appointments. Since women could not own property or have money, scribes managed the homes and property formerly owned by the men in their family. Women were not allowed an education and often could not read the documents scribes wrote that stole their homes from them. The one bright spot was the tradition of Israelite law that mandated care of widows and orphans by distributing food and clothing and whatever else was needed.

Unscrupulous scribes added unnecessarily to the numbers. The woman in the first reading was well-known in scripture, but not positively for Israelites. She was not Jewish, and through Eljah received the

only miracle done during a terrible drought. It galled many of the leaders that no miracles were done for Israelites. God rewarded her generosity with food for her, her son and the prophet, Elijah, for a whole year. It was not just in the time of the Lord that women were undervalued. In the fifties or early sixties, my mother fought to get a credit card *and*, in her name, but it had to be in her husband's name even though she was the bill payer of the family. Her own good credit history did not show up for years, making it hard for her to buy large items like cars. Some progress for women has been made since then, but many countries still ignore the dignity of women and children.

**Concl.** One lesson from the two different scribes is for us is not to judge any group of people based on one or two individuals. [*Living Liturgy*, 2021,

Liturgical Press] There *were* some good scribes. There *are* some good neighbors. Despite reports to the contrary, there *are* some good religious and political leaders. The Lord purposely drew a sharp contrast between the arrogance and the bad use of power of some leaders in the religious community and the humble example of the woman who had little power. What he said to his disciples was the woman's attitude was far more powerful and her contribution far more than the scribes or the influential people in the community. The others marked by fancy robes and false humility depended on themselves for their lives. She depended on God for hers. How we use what power, authority or influence we have tells who we depend on for our lives.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft, November 7, 2021