



AND Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. ⁴² And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. ⁴³ And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, *Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: ⁴⁴ For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.* (Mark 12:41-44)

The modern church has become engrossed in the building of an institution and, in the process, has forgotten the PURPOSE of the institution. The monied class are well received and the poor and destitute are little regarded. *“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”* (Hosea 6:6) The once-and-for-all sacrifice has already been made. Our righteousness is not measured in dollars and cents, in gold and silver, but upon the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. What can we give the Lord that is not already His – only one object of value – our hearts to be His Temple.

In the early part of the last century, a great minister named Russel H. Conwell delivered a speech to a men’s group entitled, Acres of Diamonds. That speech became so popular that Dr. Conwell delivered it across the United States more than six thousand times and finally recorded it in a book of the same title. He later became chaplain of Temple University in Philadelphia. The following story is true and involves Chaplain Conwell and a poor and destitute little girl whose small offering built a church.



Fifty-Seven Cents that built A Church¹

A sobbing little girl stood near a small church from which she had been turned away because it was 'overcrowded.' "I can't go to Sunday School," she sobbed to the pastor as he passed. Taking her by the hand, he found a place for her inside the sanctuary. The child was so touched that she went to bed that night thinking of the children who had no place to worship Jesus.

Some two years later, this child lay dead in one of the tenement buildings, and the parents called for the kindhearted pastor to make the funeral arrangements. Beneath her pillow he found a crumpled purse rummaged from the dump. In it were 57 pennies and a note scribbled in childish handwriting. "This is to help build the little church bigger so more children can go to Sunday School," the note read.

For two years she had saved for this offering of love. When the pastor read that note, he knew instantly what he would do.

Carrying this note and the cracked, red pocketbook to the pulpit, he told the story of her unselfish love and devotion. He challenged his deacons to get busy and raise enough money for the larger church – plain and simple, not a cathedral.

A newspaper learned of the story and published it. It was read by a realtor who offered them a lot worth many thousands. When told the church could not pay so much, he offered it for a modest figure and said he would take as a down payment "exactly 57 cents."

Church members made large subscriptions. Checks came from far and wide. Within five years the little girl's gift had grown to \$250,000.00. Her unselfish love, like the widow's two mites, had paid large dividends.

When you are in the City of Philadelphia, look up Temple Baptist Church, with a seating capacity of 3300, and Temple University, where hundreds of students are trained. Have a look, too, at the Good Samaritan Hospital and at a Sunday School building which houses hundreds of Sunday scholars, so that no child in that vicinity will ever need to be left outside at Sunday School time.

¹ A true story of a real event written by William S. Deal and published by Old Tracts Society of Shoals, Indiana

In one of the rooms of this building may be seen the picture of a sweet face of the little girl whose 57 cents so sacrificially saved made such remarkable history. Alongside of it is a picture of her pastor, Dr. Russell H. Conwell.

Postscript:

Please note it was not the amount of money that began construction of the Sunday School auditorium at Temple, but the love behind the 57 cents that gave impetus to the hearts of many to proceed to do a work for the Lord. If a little twelve year old girl, poor and without adequate means in her home life, can make such a difference, what is holding each of us back from making a difference in the lives of many?

WHEN the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: **32** And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: **33** And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. **34** Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: **35** For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: **36** Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. **37** Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? **38** When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? **39** Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? **40** And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. **41** Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: **42** For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: **43** I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. **44** Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? **45** Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. **46** And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt 25:31-46)