

# Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

## CONSUMING RESOURCES AND OUR CONSUMING RESOURCE

Mark 12:38-44

### Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost Analysis by Chris Repp

38As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! 40They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

41He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. 42A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. 43Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. 44For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

*Note: Before you read my analysis here, you must first go and read (if you have not read it already) Bob Bertram’s sermon on this text, delivered during my first quarter of seminary at LSTC in 1985. If you read nothing else in preparing to preach on this pericope, that will be enough. It can be found at <https://crossings.org/archive/bob/sermons/GODOFTHEWIDOWS.pdf>*

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## DIAGNOSIS: Consuming

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Devouring***

According to the World Bank, twenty percent of us—let's call us the rich people of the world—consume more than three quarters of the earth's resources, and we are doing so in an unsustainable way. Rain forests are disappearing at an alarming rate. The seas are being overfished. Water supplies and available arable land are reaching their limits. But we rich devour not only resources, we devour people as well. We rely on cheap labor to meet our insatiable desire for more and more products and services. And our disproportionate consumption deprives many others of basic necessities—especially for those who are the most vulnerable in our world.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Arrogant***

But we rich deserve to be rich. We deserve to have more than others. That is our reward, our blessing from God because we are so industrious, so hard working, so clever. That's what we tell ourselves in the United States, anyway—the richest country on earth. That's why we are the most free, have the best health care, the best education, the highest standard of living—at least those among us who are willing to pull their own weight and not just look for a handout. We have earned our honored place in the world, and don't mind telling you about it. And not only that, but we help out all kinds of other countries around the world with billions of dollars in foreign aid each year. We're not only successful, we're also plenty generous.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Condemned***

Who would dare to tell us a different story from the one we tell ourselves? Who would dare to say that we don't really give very much in comparison with what we take? Who would dare say "God

damn America” or “they will receive the greater condemnation”? Will we be shocked to find out that this is God’s Word? That God himself stands in judgment over our self-righteous, self-serving, self-justification of our arrogant, devouring ways?

## **PROGNOSIS: Consumed**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) :** *Life-giving (or just “Giving”)*

Shocked indeed. Offended even. Enough to devour this one, this Jesus, who dares to speak for God and against us. We will deal with him as we deal with all threats to our cherished way of life. We will make him suffer. We will silence him. And it all seems to go just as we planned. He freely gives himself over into our power, to suffer, to be silenced, to be devoured. Only then do we learn that “truly this man was God’s son,” and that his death and resurrection have saved us from the brink; that he was devoured in order to save us from being consumed by God’s wrath and save us for life as God intended.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) :** *Humble*

And so we continue to devour him, week in and week out, as he offers himself to us in the Eucharistic meal. Now he lives in us, and we in him. Now we recognize the folly of our old, consuming ways, and our selfish exploitation of others. Now we understand that the only thing we truly have deserved is death and destruction, but by the grace of the Consumed One we have life instead. Now we boast only in him and in his cross.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *Generous*

And following his example we now give ourselves away as bread for the world, seeking to serve not ourselves but the world that God so loves in Jesus Christ. Our consuming passion becomes the Good News of his death and resurrection, an unlimited resource for the life of the world.