SHE GAVE THE MOST

"But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others." (Mark 12:42-44)

Money in India is printed in different sizes and colors. A 10 rupee bill, for example, is slightly larger and a different color from a 5. This same pattern is true for all their bills.   In India the value of paper money is determined by size and color. Some years ago a friend from India was cheated by some scoundrels who took advantage of his ignorance. He incorrectly assumed that since U.S. dollars were all the same size and color, they were all of equal value.

It is also a mistake, however, to naively assume that big numbers on money make it valuable. For example, you can shop on line for a 100 trillion dollar bill from Zimbabwe and purchase one for around $100. Even this, however, is a scam. The use of the Zimbabwean dollar as an official currency was effectively abandoned on April 12, 2009. Paying $100 for a worthless piece of paper is not a bargain. I am told that Zimbabwe eventually tried to mop up their worthless currency by offering to swap bank notes for as little as one U.S. dollar per 35 quadrillion Zimbabwean dollars.

Our text states that the two small copper coins contributed by the widow were worth only a fraction of a penny. Is that so? Who said?

Many years ago an "anonymous" article appeared in church papers about a prankster who switched price tags in a department store. Items originally priced for hundreds of dollars were on sale for pennies. Items originally priced for pennies were priced at hundreds of dollars. This factitious story was used to illustrate how the devil has deceived the world into making treasures out of trash, and vice versa. Even this, however, illustrates again the arbitrary nature of estimating value.

Jesus told the parable of a "rich" man who built bigger barns to store "his" grain and "his" goods (Lk. 12:16 - 21). While many would consider him wise and successful, Jesus said he was a fool. God does not consider temporary things as true treasure. He does, however, consider the way we handle "worldly wealth" to determine if we can be trusted with "true riches" (Lk. 16:11).

So the poor widow put two small copper coins into the treasury. What was the actual value of these coins? Certainly we can cite no greater authority than God Himself. He is the ultimate authority. Certainly God can determine the true value of anything. As you know, the Sovereign of the universe declared "this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others".

It is important to understand that while little children "pretend" God does not! Little children may drink water and "pretend" it is wine. Little children may spread out their arms and "pretend" they are flying. When God, however, says something, it is literally so. This is the very essence of creation. Every time God said something, it literally became reality. In the same way, the Judge of the Universe not only determines the value of money, but also the guilt or innocence of all people. When God declares you "guilty" or "righteous", He is not "pretending".

God 's thoughts are higher than ours (Is. 55:9) When Paul came to share God's values he realized that all earthly achievements are really only rubbish (Phil. 3:8). The late Wesley Tuttle was like Paul. As one of the first three artists signed by the Capital Record Company he had plenty of earthly wealth and fame.. His recording of "Detour" in 1946 sold over a million copies. When Tuttle gave his heart to Christ, however, he burned his earthly bridges and his signature song became - "I'd Rather Have Jesus".   The poor widow of our text obviously felt the same way. Her relationship with God meant more to her than money regardless of how valuable it was. As the late Jim Elliott said: *"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose"*.   The saved would "rather have Jesus". " What would you rather have?"