

Some gifts seem so small in value at the time that they are given, but prove to be substantial because they are remembered forever. They have an everlasting impact on the recipients, and perhaps even ourselves.

The Great Teacher was asked many times to make a judgment about people by those who were seeking some type of advantage<sup>1</sup>. One of the best known had to do with a woman accused of adultery<sup>2</sup>. He was regularly approached early in each day, when He had just finished His time of meditation on the mountain<sup>3</sup> and the people had begun to gather around Him. He was always ready, though, to sit down and speak to them.

In one instance, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been engaged to teach the village children. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman does not follow the rules that we have set down for the job we gave her to do. We ask that you evaluate her work and judge her poor performance. We are committed to relieve her of her duties. Now what do you say?”

They were using this request for “evaluation” to avoid the appearance of firing her themselves, for the people knew that she was a great teacher<sup>4</sup> and child advocate.

Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. Some thought that he was writing out His judgment. When the accusers kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Who is there to speak for this woman? Who has benefitted from her work?” And He stooped down again and wrote on the ground.

After a few moments, a young man moved forward to speak. “I was a bit of a problem, and gave her attitude. But she never condemned me. She listened and knew what I was interested in, and one day brought me a representative toy from the woodcarver that showed that she cared for me. I proudly display this in my home in her honor!”

Another spoke up, saying, “The teacher was always helping those in need. She paid a tax for me one time, knowing that I could not afford to pay it!”

These two opened the floodgates, as one after another spoke of how the teacher offered her heart and soul to her students. Some claimed that she had brought them out of their shell by inspiring them to be their best. Others told of gifts of money or her time – no matter the social station of the student.

It was clear that though the teacher had not performed according to the “rules” that would supposedly make her a good teacher, she was actually one of the best. The teacher was being evaluated – not for her actual teaching ability (which the evaluators were not competent to judge), but for her conformance to a pattern designed by the administrators.

She not only taught how to read and write, but how to think and to be. These were things that the leaders had not even considered. She just wanted to teach, and had great experience and ability; these are characteristics that can’t be legislated. She possessed the gift of teaching with love.

As more and more in the crowd contributed to the praises for the teacher, the accusers began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you, but praise you for your service as did those who spoke in your behalf!” Jesus declared. “Go now and continue to give of yourself without concern for repayment<sup>5</sup>.”

Then Jesus, thinking about the gifts of the teacher, told the parable of the mustard seed<sup>6</sup>. “The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches.”

I realized then that we don’t have to move mountains, but the smallest gift like a cup of water<sup>7</sup> to one in need is truly significant. You never know how much the value of the gift might grow as time goes on and bring strong relationships into our lives.

And we may need such friendships later in life. I wondered, “Who would stand up for us in heaven against the accuser? No one spoke up for Jesus at His trial.” Would there be those beside Christ who would be our advocates? Perhaps those we treated as though they were Christ<sup>8</sup> would speak in our behalf. The smallest gifts may turn out to be the greatest!

1. Luke 12:13-14
2. John 8:1-11
3. John 8:1
4. see Matthew 14:5 and Matthew 21:26 with respect to John the Baptist
5. Luke 6:32-36
6. Luke 13:18-19
7. Matthew 10:42
8. Matthew 26:31-46