

Simon & Miser

Miser: What's the matter with you? That man didn't shake you, did he? 2 coin.

Simon: No, I just wonder... I wonder if this *is* unforgivable.

Miser: What? Tax-collecting? Simon, is that why you've been at temple? To atone for this...sin?

Simon: *(almost ashamed)* yes.

Miser: Oh, Simon

Simon: I just. I know this has to be done. And I became a tax-collector because I truly thought I could help people.

Miser: Help people? Do you even hear yourself...?

Simon: No, listen. I do. And you do too. We are fair. We don't "shake down" people at their homes, we don't charge exorbitant rates...we just, we just take a little more for our own income. We're not bad men.

Miser: I just charged that man 4 coin more than what was owed.

Simon: Yes, but really it was to make an example. He was getting out of control. The guard didn't faze him, he couldn't be reasoned with...hopefully hurting his coin purse will make him learn. And that's what I mean. You could have doubled it. You didn't. Since people come to us to pay, it helps them since we're a lot more fair than others. I just hope maybe...maybe if I do everything right, the Lord can forgive me.

Miser: *Chuckles* Let me tell you something, Simon. Do you know who that man was?

Simon: *Shrugs.* I've seen him a couple of times but...

Miser: That man was once a good friend. We lived next door to each other. He was widowed young and I helped with his kids. His daughter was like my own. But when I became a tax-collector, he shunned me and berated me so that I ended up moving closer to town. Cut his family off from me as well. And last week, he gave his daughter away in marriage and didn't even invite me to celebrate. All because of this profession.

Simon: Miser. I... that's terrible...

Miser: *(miser looks up and laughs)* He only owed 4 coin.

Simon looks on in shock, sympathy now gone. Miser laughs at his reaction)

Miser: Exactly, Simon. I did charge him double...could have charged him far more than that. But he doesn't have it. And he's got two more kids to provide for so I couldn't have him thrown in jail. But I did deceive him. To punish him. To make him feel at least some of the pain he made me feel. This was pure revenge. We are bad men, Simon. Malachi was exactly right. We will reap what we sow. God does see us. Now. Back to it. Next!