

In a sermon delivered December 1, 1912, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Philadelphia the Rev. Russell Conwell spoke about little girl called Hattie May Wiatt.

She lived near a church where the Sunday School was very crowded and he told her that one day they would have buildings big enough to allow every one to attend who wanted to.

Later, Hattie May Wiatt became sick and died. Rev. Conwell was asked to conduct the funeral and the girl's mother told him that Hattie May had been saving money to help build a bigger church and gave him the little purse in which she had saved 57 cents.

Rev. Conwell had the 57 cents turned into 57 pennies, told the congregation the story of little Hattie May and sold the pennies for a return of about \$250.

In addition, 54 of the original 57 pennies were returned to Rev. Conwell and he later put them up on display.

This was in 1886 when 57 cents was no small savings account for a little girl from a poor family. Some of the members of the church formed what they called the Wiatt Mite Society which was dedicated to making Hattie May's 57 cents grow as much as possible and to buy the property for the Primary Department of the Sunday school.

A house nearby was purchased with the \$250 that Hattie May's 57 cents had produced and the rest is history. The first classes of Temple College, later Temple University, were held in that house.

It was later sold to allow Temple College to move and the growth of Temple, along with the founding of the Good Samaritan Hospital (Now the Temple University Hospital) have been powerful testimonies to Hattie May Wiatt's dream.

You will find other versions of this story exaggerating the effect of Hattie May's 57 cents, but what is important to me is that her dedication and generosity did inspire the efforts that resulted in the provision of the much needed buildings.



Hattie May Wiatt and the Rev Russell Conwell



"Hattie May Wiatt Sunday School Building of Grace Baptist Church, where earliest Temple College classes were held, 1887. Bought by The Hattie Wiatt Society, with the '57 cents' to house the classes overflowing from the vestry rooms of Grace Baptist Church."

I was reminded of Jesus' comment on the widow's mite? It's in Luke 21: 1-4



And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings [b]for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

Jesus is teaching the disciples that it is not the amount of money given that is important, but rather the sacrifice made in the offering.

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