

25th Sunday after Pentecost
“Jesus’ Stewardship Sermon” (Mark 12:41-44)
November 10, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Mark 12:41-44.

“41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. 42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. 43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

So far the text...

Our text takes place on Tuesday of Holy Week – three days before Jesus makes the supreme offering of Himself on the cross for the sins of the world. Jesus and His disciples are in the temple, in the area where people come to give their offerings. Jesus was sitting opposite the treasury and saw the people putting money into the offering horns. What Jesus observed He wanted His disciples to know and understand. So He called them to Himself and gave them a message on stewardship.

On this last day of teaching in the temple, Jesus made sure that His disciples and all of us hear about giving. Indeed, it is a privilege to give because it springs forth from faith. Where there is faith, the offering is pleasing to God whether it is great or small. And Jesus, who knows all our hearts, because He is God, looked into the hearts of the people who were giving their offerings in the temple and told the disciples what He saw.

Nothing escapes all omniscient Jesus. He observed the rich people give their offerings and a poor widow. Certainly the offerings of the rich people who gave them in acts of faith, were God pleasing. But, would one be overlooked or disregarded if one was not rich? Would a small amount be of little importance? Indeed not! For though there was much rattling of coins that came from the offerings of the rich people, the sound of two copper coins, the value being just one cent, did not escape Jesus’ attention.

What all our hearts purpose and give to God great or small, reluctantly or willingly, begrudgingly or cheerfully is plain to our Lord. And above all, He loves a cheerful giver who trustingly gives out of love to Him.

First of all, how was the widow's offering an act of trust? In the eyes of the people who may have observed her drop in two copper coins, it may not have meant much. The amount didn't have much value. For someone who was rich, if this offering somehow fell out of one's pocket and was lost, it wouldn't be given a second thought. One wouldn't take the time to try and find two pennies for a rich person's life, wouldn't be affected by losing two pennies.

But, for this widow, Jesus knew what these two pennies meant for her. He knew that they were the sum of her wealth. It was all she had. Whatever she could use them for, a morsel of bread, it was all that there was for her. And, what did she do with these two coins? Did she keep one and give the other? That might seem like the logical thing to do. But, she didn't act out of logic, but out of faith. She gave both of the coins. As insignificant as that was, it represented her whole livelihood... everything she had.

What represents our livelihood? A few weeks ago we heard the account of the rich young man who came to Jesus asking Him what he must do to gain eternal life. Jesus' reply was a test to see if there was faith. For as we heard on Reformation Sunday, and as Martin Luther came to know from Romans 3:28 **"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."**

You know the commandments, the deeds of the law, Jesus listed some to the young rich man. Oh yes, I've kept them since my childhood. Really? And your riches...your livelihood, are you willing to give them all to the poor and follow Me? Do you trust in your riches more than Me? Do you love them more than Me? Is it your god beside Me?

And the rich young man went away sadly, for he didn't trust Jesus to give him eternal life. The widow did. And so she was willing to give all she had and trust that Jesus would provide for her daily needs. How? Our text doesn't give the details. But the Lord who saw her situation and took the time to tell of it to His disciples, do you not think that He also gave to her what she needed? The Lord who sent Elijah to Zarephath to make sure she and her son had oil and flour until the drought ended, would He not also help this widow? The Lord who gave the Zarephath' widow's son life after he became ill and died, would He not sustain this widow's life?

Indeed, we heard these words from Psalm 146 today:

“Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the Lord his God, 6 Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, 7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners. 8 The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; The Lord raises those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous. 9 The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow;”

The Almighty Creator of all things, Who keeps His truth forever, gives food to the hungry...relieves the fatherless and widow! God’s Word doesn’t give us the details on how He helped the widow, but it gives us the promises that He did!

We remember, also how the Lord healed a blind man who professed his faith in Jesus in opposition to the rulers of the church. Though his parents cowered in fear, he did not. Did Jesus not seek him out, track him down, and tell him who He was?

“35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” 36 He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” 37 And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.” 38 Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him.” (John 9:35-38)

Where there is trust in God, there is no fear. There was no worry or fear in the widow’s heart.

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 6, **“31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”**

For if God has given you His kingdom, His righteousness through faith, the greatest of gifts, and made you His child, will He not also sustain you, child of God? John tells us these words in his first epistle in chapter 4.

“17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has

not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:17-19)

Christian stewardship begins with a heart that has been loved by God, perfected by God, without fear of judgement for Jesus has paid the price of our sins by His love for all people on the cross. Stewardship is an act of love because we have been loved first.

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul encourages the believers who have been blessed with faith to also abound in the grace of giving.

“7 But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.”

What is our motivation? Paul quickly reminds us.

“9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”
Rich in forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, and rich in spiritual gifts, talents and the grace of giving.

Listen how Paul continues in chapter 9 to speak of Jesus’ principles of stewardship.

“5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.”

Stewardship is never done grudgingly. Never out of obligation.

“7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

Whenever someone says that you must give 10%, you just made an obligation, where there is none. For the tithe was a shadow of the first fruits Jesus, who is the reality of our salvation. If one purposes to give 10%, do it cheerfully. If one gives more or less, do it

out of a loving generous spirit. For your salvation has been paid for in full by Jesus, not your offerings or indulgences said Luther.

Jesus is the first fruit of those risen from the dead. All have been freed from the law. The truth has set us free. Christ didn't go to the cross begrudgingly. Jesus wasn't compelled. He didn't have to go. God's fallen creation deserved the punishment, not God. But it was the will, the voluntary will of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit that Jesus gave His life – out of love! Motivated purely out of love. For God so loved the world – loved all who were unlovable, loved what was sinful and rebellious, loved all the murderers, rapists, adulterers, thieves, and liars...you and me and everyone, He loved ...not because He had to, but because that is who God is – love... and He willingly gave Himself.

And so, we see how a widow could give all that she had, out of love for her God. And we see how God has given us the privilege, grace and joy of cheerfully thanking Him with our offerings...in faith towards Him and love for His Kingdom and His work of sharing the Good News of the Gospel. Amen!

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)