

25th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, November 10, 2024

Introduction to the day

Widows are visible everywhere in today's readings. Jesus denounces those scribes who pray impressive prayers but devour widows' houses. He commends the poor widow who in his view gave far more than the major donors. Jesus doesn't see her simply as an object of compassion or charity. She, like the widow of Zarephath who shares her last bit of food with Elijah, does something of great importance.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you show forth your almighty power chiefly by reaching out to us in mercy. Grant us the fullness of your grace, strengthen our trust in your promises, and bring all the world to share in the treasures that come through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

FIRST LESSON: 1 Kings 17:8-16

A reading from 1 Kings.

This chapter begins the story of Elijah. God sends a drought on Israel because of the sins of King Ahab. This passage depicts God's saving acts not only on behalf of Elijah, but also on behalf of those who are associated with the prophet, even a foreigner, the widow of Zarephath.

PSALM: Psalm 146

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down. (Ps. 146:7)

SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 9:24-28

A reading from Hebrews.

The letter to the Hebrews describes Christ as a high priest who offers himself as a sacrifice for our sin. Christ does not die again and again each year. He died once, is alive with God, and will reveal himself on the last day.

GOSPEL: Mark 12:38-44

After engaging in a series of public arguments with religious leaders in the temple, Jesus contrasts the proud and oppressive ways of those leaders with the sacrificial humility and poverty of the widow.

GOSPEL MESSAGE - God's Generosity Brings New Life

As we cross a busy street, a stranger's cry of "WATCH OUT!" will certainly send our heart racing. Such an outburst may not be what we expect to hear, but it is the warning needed for us to get out of the way of an approaching threat. Jesus catches our attention with a similar word today: "Beware." Beware the violence of a system that devours widows' houses while hiding behind prayers and piety; there is danger here! But this is not the only relationship Jesus urges his followers to pay attention to today. He also invites them to be aware of how one widow in their community is responding: she gives—and gives generously. What might that mean for us?

God gives generously too. We often talk about God's generosity being rooted in God's love for us. From the moment we were baptized, we have been reminded of such love that goes with us through

death and into the new life God brings. This love takes seriously all the things that tear apart our lives and world—and pays attention to where healing and repair might take hold.

God is always rooting *for us*, and we trust that Christ’s resurrection life will bring us through hardships when death has done its worst. What a gift it is to be gathered into the worshiping community week after week, to again be centered around Christ’s table and its generous promises of grace that renew us and make us whole: “The body of Christ, given for you; the blood of Christ, shed for you.” This is generosity! This is new life!

Yet we do not stay at the table. We are sent from it, together. Where do we go from here? Where might we share such grace and love this week? Perhaps not only “Beware” but also “Be aware” are our invitations to generosity as Jesus draws our attention to all the important relationships around us

THE PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Rooted in God’s abundant love for the world, let us pray for our neighbors, the church, and all of creation.

Renew your church, O God. Make us servants to one another for the sake of the gospel. Instill a heart for service and a passion for justice in our bishops, deacons, pastors, and lay leaders. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Renew your creation, O God. Sustain the earth and seas and all that is in them. Kindle in us a reverent awe for all creatures great and small, and strengthen us in our pursuit of climate justice. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Renew the nations, O God. Heal our nation’s veterans from the unseen wounds of war. We take a moment of silence to remember all those who have served or are serving in our military. (pause) Tend to their trauma and soothe burdened consciences. Guide leaders of the world to end conflicts, especially between Ukraine and Russia, Israel and Palestine, and pursue peace. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Renew your people, O God. Protect those in our communities who are vulnerable or ill especially Linda Boland, Ken Fulford, Sandra Gagnon, Shirley Glickman, Walter Hobden, Donna L. Hoffman, Claude Jeannotte, Bill Lorbetskie, Glenda Panke, Barry Rogers, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, Denita Wolfram, Elaine Yourth, Harold Yourth, Stephanie Yourth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. Accompany persons who are unemployed or underemployed, children who are in foster care, and those who live alone. Watch over and uphold them. In this moment of silence we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch (pause). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Renew this congregation, O God. Give us clarity in our mission and boldness in our witness. Bless our ministries that attend to basic needs of any who lack sufficient resources, that all may live with dignity. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Happy are those whose help was in you. We give thanks for all your faithful ones who praised you as their God all their life long. As we eagerly wait for you, inspire us by their lives of service. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We offer our prayers to you, gracious God, trusting in your boundless love for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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