

On November 11, 2012, Seminarian Nelson Grigg preached this sermon at Christ Church.

LEST WE FORGET

Pentecost 24 – Cycle B: Mark 12: 38 – 44

Today is Remembrance Day. Today is the one day of the year when we pause to honour the brave souls who have fought on behalf of our country in time of war. We normally associate Remembrance Day with the images of soldiers and war veterans and a memorial service at the cenotaph; but in this season of remembrance we also think of all Saints Day and All Souls Day, November 1st and 2nd. We remember our loved ones and friends who have passed on by visiting a cemetery where we stand in front of a grave marker and think about and give thanks for the one who has died. We sometimes see roadside memorials and shrines marking where someone has died in a car accident. Everyday I drive by a telephone pole decorated in orange with a picture of Dustin Picard, who died at 18, and was a friend of my daughter's from high school. We use pink ribbons as memorials for those who have succumbed to breast cancer and those who are survivors. Locally, we have had a community campaign of lime green ribbons for Lydia Herrle, a young lady who suffered a brain injury following an accident last May and has received a huge outpouring of love and support in the hope she might regain her youthful exuberance. Remembering and the gift of memory calls us to one another and prepares the way for love to bless us with gratitude.

The first part of the Gospel for today shows how the religious leaders of Jesus' day strutted around in fine robes in order to show everyone that they had a higher status than the common people. They were treated with high regard by people when they walked in the market and attended banquets. They used the institution and office of the synagogue for their own ends and glory, and not for the glory of God. Jesus has taught over and over that we are not to serve ourselves, but we are to serve God. The scribes, Jesus observes, are self-serving and will be punished most severely in the life to come.

What of our poor widow, described in the second part of the Gospel lesson? Jesus tells this story, which is often referred to as the Widow's Mite. A poor widow gives two copper coins to the temple treasury – all she had! Jesus compares her to all the rich people who were donating large amounts. Jesus said that rich gave out of their wealth, but she gave all that she had to live on.

Let's reflect on this selfless act a little deeper and ask, "Why did the widow give all that she had?" She gave all that she had because of her unflinching love of and trust in God. She gave all that she had because of her faith and gratitude for the God who is revealed in Scripture as the defender of those who are poor and oppressed. Words that often come to mind when one reflects on this story are: generosity, sacrifice, giving, and thanks giving. Consider the word sacrifice which comes from the Latin 'to make sacred or holy'. If you think about it, our offering is something that is consecrated, holy, and offered to God. When we say in our liturgy we give our time, our talents, and our possessions or treasure, these gifts symbolize our lives, our love, and our service that we are offering without counting the cost or the benefit. Perhaps it is not only the gift that is to be considered consecrated or made holy to God, but also the giver.

Dr. Carol Johnson, a professor at Oral Roberts University observes that, "People cannot learn to give until and unless they have learned how to receive ... At the heart of the matter, in every church, [is] the experience of being loved by God." I can relate to what she is trying to say. I have a very hard time receiving many things especially help, and lately prayers. A few weeks ago Pastor James asked me if I would like to be put on the prayer list here at Christ Church because of my hearing loss which has become more of a permanent affliction of late. I quickly said, "No, that's quite alright, thank you." In this instance and many others in my life I have not been open to receive God's many gifts. In turn, it has prevented me from giving back to God all that is God's. When I see the example in today's Gospel of the widow who was so completely aware of God's grace in her life, I wonder if I am as open, as appreciative, and as aware of God's grace as she was.

Our being here together at worship today is full of promise. This is a time when God gives to us, if we can just open ourselves to receive God's grace. He offers himself and his Son to us where, if we are able to receive this offering, we have an opportunity to be truly transformed. The widow has demonstrated to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear that she has a personal relationship with God. The Great

Thanksgiving that we celebrate as part of the Eucharistic liturgy proclaims our living relationship with Jesus. When we receive the bread and drink the wine we are reminded not only of all Jesus has done for us, but also all that he continues to do for us with his living presence in our lives.

You see, the two coins the widow gave represented her whole life which she freely gave to God. She lived out her personal relationship with God everyday by showing him faithfulness, gratitude, and love for all the peace and mercy God has given her.

Today and everyday is Remembrance Day when we remember all the saints, souls, and soldiers who have died in the name of peace and in peace. But the deeper call is to remember our God who never ceases to remember and bless and care for us; and then to respond with similar grace in all that we say and do. It is a holy transaction, born in love.

Today and everyday, the Sacrament of Holy Communion strengthens and increases our faith in Christ Jesus when we eat the bread and drink from the cup for the forgiveness of our sins, for our abundant life, and for our salvation. On Remembrance Day we say, "Lest We Forget", but every day when we pray and are thankful for the bread and the wine that is Christ Jesus, we remember the words of our Saviour, "Do this in remembrance of me."