



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 10th 2024**

Theme: “⁴⁴ She out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.”

Gathering Prayer

All: Almighty and merciful God, graciously keep from us all adversity, so that, unhindered in mind and body alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are yours. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Mark 12:38-44

³⁸ And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places ³⁹ and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰ who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.”

Gospel Focus

This poignant passage reiterates, as so much of the gospel does, that God’s ways are not our ways. Without the protection and status of husband or sons, widows were left vulnerable to poverty and social exclusions. This widow faces those conditions bravely, enters the temple to offer what she can, and is commended by Jesus for her generosity. She makes a gift that seems small to those around her. She herself probably perceived this as a small gift even though she alone knew how hard it would make her life. Yet this brief moment has been noticed and memorialized, celebrated all these thousands of years later. We, likewise, do not know what impact our sacrifices and generosity have. Things that might seem small or meaningless are noticed by God and taken up into the bigger project of bringing about God’s vision of justice and love.

Gospel Reflection

The first reading today offers the story of a widow who is down to her last handful of flour and a

tiny bit of oil. She is just about to try to eke out something for her son and herself to eat, certain it would be their last meal. While gathering sticks at the entrance of the city, the widow encounters Elijah, who asks her first for a cup of water and then for a bit of bread. She explains her situation, and Elijah's response seems initially to be incredibly insensitive. He asks her to bring him a little cake first even before she prepares something for herself and her son. What the biblical author does not recount is what kind of conflict such a request must have produced for the widow. Should she trust Elijah's God, whom the prophet insists will ensure that her jar of flour will not go empty nor the jug of oil run dry? Alternatively, should she follow her motherly instincts to feed her child first? The obligations of hospitality win out; like the widow in the gospel, she gives all she had to live on. Miraculously, the prophet's promise of a never-ending supply of flour and oil comes true.

In the gospel, we see a similar vignette of a widow who puts her last two coins, a paltry sum, into the temple treasury. Jesus comments that in contrast to those who gave from their surplus, her contribution was "all she had, her whole livelihood." Literally, the Greek says she "gave her whole life." On the one hand, we see in this woman one who embodies Jesus' gift of his whole self. As this episode is positioned just before the passion narrative, it appears that Jesus' words are laudatory of the widow's total self-gift from her position of want, held out as a model to Jesus' disciples.

Another way to understand this gospel is to see that the widow's action comes on the heels of Jesus' critique of scribes who thrive on their privileges and seek honor. Worst of all, they "devour the houses of widows." It is not clear to what practices this phrase refers, but the scribes may be the ancient equivalent of televangelists who bilk unsuspecting widows of their last dollars. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' is very critical of the temple institution, and he warns his disciples not to ever be the kind of leader who would prey on those who are most vulnerable.

In these readings there is a particular warning to religious leaders not to exploit those who are poorest. There is also an invitation to all the faithful to emulate the hospitality of God, whose total gift of self is replicated in Jesus' self-surrender in love. In no way does such a stance glorify poverty, for throughout the gospel we see Jesus' intense efforts to raise up those who are poorest. Rather, these readings provoke reflection on and analysis of the causes of hunger and poverty, urging us to do all in our power to eradicate them. Such work takes everything we have.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — I Kings 17:10-16

¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." ¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹² And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a cruse; and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." ¹³ And Elijah said to her, "Fear not; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For thus says the LORD the God of Israel, 'The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'"

¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said; and she, and he, and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of meal was not spent, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD which he spoke by Elijah.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

R: Praise the Lord, my soul!

The Lord keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets captives free. **(R)**

The Lord gives sight to the blind; the Lord raises up those who were bowed down.
The Lord loves the just; the Lord protects strangers. **(R)**

The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia. **(R)**

Second Reading — Hebrews 9:24-28

²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

678. Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching.(Cf. Dan 7:10; Joel 3-4; Mal 3: 19; Mt 3:7-12) Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light.(Cf Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; I Cor 4:5) Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned.(Cf. Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42) Our attitude to our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love.(Cf. Mt 5:22; 7:1-5) On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."(Mt 25:40)

2444. "The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. (CA 57; cf. Lk 6:20-22, Mt 8:20; Mk 12:41-44) Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need."(Eph 4:28) It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty. (Cf. CA 57)

Sharing and Discussion

1. How does the pursuit of "the best seats" and "places of honor" contradict the values Jesus promotes? What are the alternative values that Jesus might be emphasizing?
2. "There is more joy in giving than receiving." How was this reflected in the life of Jesus? What is your experience?
3. Why did Jesus highlight this act of giving, by the poor woman, over others who give out of their abundance?

Closing Prayer

All: God whose love stretches beyond all telling, you sent your Son to show us the way to eternal life. Hear our prayers that we might follow his way in both word and deed. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

**Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom
Every Wednesday
Time: 8 – 9.30 pm**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>

**Meeting ID: 276 007 3734
Passcode: 1WordOfGod**

All are welcome!

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References:

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
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