

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary 32)

07-11-2021

St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Ruth 3:1-5, 4:3-17 Boaz marries Ruth and they have a son
Naomi is blessed by this

Psalms 127 Life without God is senseless

Hebrews 9:23-28 Jesus died once to bring salvation to those who
are waiting for Him.

Mark 12: 38-44 Jesus warns about religious leaders seeking Honour
Jesus teaches about the poor widow who gave all she had

Introduction

Today in the sermon I'd like us to look at how Jesus used the example of the poor widow in the temple, to be a great example for us, of gratitude, of generosity, and of faithfulness.

Description of Scene

Firstly, let's look at the scene. Jesus is teaching his disciples in the temple. Now the disciples are mostly a mob of country folk. Not used to being in the big city of Jerusalem. Not used to being in the temple. The temple in Jerusalem at that time was probably one of the great wonders of the world, given its size and its magnificent features. I can just imagine the disciples looking around in awe, at what they were surrounded by.

Jesus had just warned them about how the teachers of the law, loved money, and how they loved being important. Then he gets the disciples to focus in on the temple treasury. They watch as some put in large amounts of money.

Then Jesus brings their attention to a poor widow. I doubt if anyone else in the temple would have even noticed her that day. With all the business of the temple and with many wealthy people placing in large amounts, a poor widow, who only drops in two small coins would be easy to miss. Yet Jesus sees her. He doesn't miss her, and he doesn't miss the significance of her actions.

It also seems strange that she is described as a poor widow. Widows in that time and culture, were generally poor. There was no social security system like we have today, and many would have had to beg in the crowds just to survive.

I know crowds are not something we have had much experience of in the last two years, but I imagine the crowds at the temple would have been impressive for the people there. Much like us going to the Ekka in Brisbane or the Royal Easter Show in Sydney. There are so many things in a crowd that you don't see, but Jesus saw this woman, and although we don't even know her name, her example has been passed on to us 2000 years after the event.

Example for Us

So how is this woman an example for us?
After all she only put in two small coins.

The significance is not in the amount, but in the spirit in which it is given.

A gift which is given grudgingly or for recognition loses its value. When we give, we need to remember that gifts of any size are pleasing to God.

God is pleased, when the gifts we bring to God, are given out of gratitude to God for all he has done for us, and when they are given in a spirit of generosity.

A challenge before us today is do we show gratitude, and are we generous toward God?

But let's focus a little more on the poor widow. When you hear this story, I'm not sure what you think about. It might make you think about how much you give for God's work. When I read it again in preparation for today, it really challenged me. I realized it was such an extraordinary example, and I had no chance of ever really matching up to the poor widow. Jesus said she gave everything she had to live on. I can't imagine doing that right now. I like to be organized and to make sure I've planned ahead, and to be sure, this isn't a bad thing. It is good for us to take care of our responsibilities, and be wise stewards of the gifts that God has bestowed upon us.

But this woman gave everything she had to God. She trusted God so implicitly that she was able to give God everything she had to live on.

For me this example from Jesus is not just about financial giving, because I don't believe anyone here today would be able to match up to the poor widow. She gave everything. She gave 100% of all she had to live on.

Rather, I see it as a challenge to us as to how much God really means to us.

What does it mean for us to say we put our trust in God, and when we work that out, what action do we take?

Hebrews

The reading from the letter to the Hebrews today gets right to the heart of the Good News we have in the person of Jesus. In verses 26 to 28 we hear these words:-

“But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, 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.”

We have even more reason to place our faith and trust in God than the poor widow, because we have this knowledge of Good News from Jesus.

The actions of gratitude and generosity of the poor widow today show that her faith was in God, and she trusted God implicitly.

In a sense she was already waiting eagerly for God.

Conclusion

Today we have heard of the faith, gratitude and generosity of the poor widow. If we accept that Jesus died for us and we live in the hope of His resurrection, then how does it show in our lives Now?

The primary purpose of our lives, as Christians, is to live in relationship with God. God wants our relationship with him, to be like the relationship he had with the poor widow we hear of in the Gospel reading today.

She was willing to give everything to God, just as Jesus has given everything for us.

Today we should be challenged by the example of the poor widow.

Knowing how much we are loved and cherished by God, and that we are secure in God’s love through Jesus, how are we showing faith, gratitude and generosity in our lives?

How eagerly are we waiting for Jesus in our lives?

Amen.