

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost-November 10, 2024

Introduction to themes for the Day

Salvation is about so much more than what happens after we die. It's about living now and it's about God comforting people amid their struggles. Jesus' confronting corruption that happened in a system meant to do good is one way salvation comes about in the here and now.

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 Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Gospel: Mark 12:38-44 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

38 As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces **39** and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! **40** They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

The Widow's Offering

41 He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. **42** A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. **43** Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. **44** For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

SERMON

If you're looking for scripture to support appeals to congregants for financial support of their churches, look somewhere else. The widow's sacrifice is the most scathing indictment of corruption in a system that not only fails her, it exploits her.

The disproportionate burden of corrupted systems falls on the poor. Ask the prophet Amos. Ask Jesus. Read a newspaper, or the online equivalent.

Former US Secretary of Labour Robert Reich reports Walmart hiked the prices on their Great Value brand and profits surged by 93 percent amounting to 10.5 billion dollars, about two thirds of which went back to shareholders dividends and buybacks for the executives.

Canadian news sources including the Globe and Mail reported that in 2022, former Loblaw's CEO Galen Weston received 8.4 million in salary. In 2023, Weston's successor Per Bank raked in 22 million dollars of salary. In 2024, Canadian doctors who assess patients for malnutrition have been instructed to look for scurvy.

Maybe you're hearing and reading what many of us are. Canadian Food banks reports there will be a million more visits to food banks this month compared to five years ago. Amanda Upper at Port Cares told our congregations a year or two ago that Food Banks were never meant to solve the inequities in our system...but to bring some relief to those who are left behind—and even exploited.

Is the church really OK with a widow giving her last few coins to a system that made itself rich devouring her house? Is the church really OK with CEO's getting hundreds of times the money a rank and file worker earns? Is the church really OK with our neighbours living in tents downtown and rummaging through dumpsters for food? Does the church remember that Jesus sides with the poor and marginalized and not the rich and powerful?

The church can heed words from the prophet Micah ...do justice now, love kindness now, and walk humbly now... we also can draw from the wisdom of Pirkei Avot who writes in Ethics of our Fathers,

You are not obligated to complete the work but neither are you free to abandon it.”
([Pirkei Avot \(Ethics of our Fathers\)](#) 2:16)

