

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I. Story – told

Once upon a time, a friend of mine named Josh went to Church.

His business required him to be “on the road” a lot, so he usually went to church in whatever town he was in that Sunday.

This also gave him the opportunity to look around and try different churches.

Once he went to a church that was all new and glitzy – when he went inside it looked more like the set of a game show than a church:

- there were spotlights all around and the biggest sound system Josh had ever seen.

- There were bright colored lights hung everywhere and a big scoreboard contraption was set up right in the front of the church for all to see.

Josh wondered what all this was for as the service began. He soon found out.

After the sermon, the minister picked up a wireless microphone and began moving through the congregation with a collection plate.

The spotlights followed him everywhere he went, and would light up the person he was talking to.

Then the minister would say into the microphone the amount each person put in the plate.

“Twenty dollars – twenty dollars – twenty-FIVE dollars,” the minister said. And the congregation began to applaud.

“Twenty dollars,” the minister continued through the pews.

“Fifty dollars,” the minister called; and the congregation began a **rhythmic clap** as if they were at a ball game.

The minister kept on moving and said, “Another fifty dollars.”

It was then that Josh noticed that the scoreboard was totaling the amount, and a camera was focusing on each person as they made their gift.

The congregation became silent and the clapping ceased when the minister raised his hand.

“Are you ready for his?” he asked. “Are YOU ready for this ... ONE – HUNDRED – DOLLARS!!”

And with that – the lights began to flash and dance – music blared out of the speakers – bells and sirens sounded – and the scoreboard when crazy.

After everyone calmed down, the minister continued through the church calling out the gifts as he went, until he came to the last row;

it was occupied by a woman with her four children sitting with her.

“Five dollars,” the minister announced, “the widow puts in five dollars.”

And the congregation began to laugh and jeer that anyone would put in such a small amount.

Josh couldn’t stand it anymore. He jumped to his feet crying, “You don’t understand!” You don’t understand!”

The congregation fell silent. They all stared. “It is she who is blessed – not these rich people. For these all gave their gifts out of the abundance of their wealth; while this woman, poor as she is, has put in her grocery money – it’s all she has to live on.”

Josh turned and walked away. The congregation sat dumbfounded.

And the flashing scoreboard and the blinking lights didn’t seem so glamorous anymore.

II. The Widow's Gift

A. We heard this story in our Gospel today, as *Josh* – or Jesus – sat in the Temple watching people making their gifts.

1. It was the day after his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem – just hours before he was to die – and Jesus and his Disciples were sitting in the Temple across from the collection boxes.

2. They were called “The Trumpets” because that’s what they looked like – large Ram’s Horn Trumpets with an enormous opening at the top that curled down into collection boxes below.

3. There were 13 of them, each with its own purpose: to buy grain, or wine, or oil for the sacrifices, and one to pay for the daily expenses of the Temple itself.

4. As Jesus watched, a **WIDOW** came into view – she looked from side to side to be sure no one was watching – and then she scurried forward as fast as she could in mouse-like fashion – and put her offering in the Trumpet.



5. It was two coins, worth about a penny – but it was all that she had to live on – where her next meal would come from, God only knew – but she had to make her offering to God.

B. And it was this **WIDOW** and not all the people with their **rich gifts** that Jesus said was blessed, “Because what she gave was truly **sacrificial**.”

1. She gave because she was **FAITHFUL**.

2. There was no economic safety net for **WIDOWS** in those days – without a husband to provide for her, a Widow had to rely on the charity of her family or the gifts of others to survive.

3. She gave what she had, and put her very existence at risk.

4. The large sums of all the other givers cost them virtually nothing, because they gave out of their abundance – they had much more.

5. This woman not only gave her whole Social Security Check – she threw in her IRA as well – because she was FAITHFUL.

6. Did those two little coins make a difference in the Temple’s operating budget – probably not – but they made a huge difference in the life of that woman, for she gave out of her poverty that she might be FAITHFUL to God.

III. We are Called to be Faithful

A. We too are called to be FAITHFUL.

1. We are called to be as FAITHFUL in our relationship with God as that woman was in hers.

2. Giving our all – and even a little more – to bring God’s love to this world that needs it so much – yet seems to push it away.

3. We are called to be FAITHFUL – faithful in addressing the needs of one another – and those so desperate for God’s love.

B. So, how do we give?

1. Do we give to God the things that are God’s?

- Or do we try to cheat God?

2. Do we try to whittle down the price?

3. Do we try to make deals with God?

- You know, “Just give me this and I’ll give you that”

- and then never follow through.

4. If we’re honest with ourselves, we’re probably closer to the giving practices of the Scribes in the story than to the Widow.

5. We too like to be noticed.

- We too like to be held up as examples;
- We too give out of our abundance – knowing that we always

have more.

C. Once again the question comes down to this: How are we going to give this year to the work and ministry of God through St. Columba's?

1. You've all received your Stewardship packet;

- you've looked at the "Narrative Budget" to see what we have done with what we've been given.

- you've heard and seen how we have **persevered** in the darkest days of the pandemic and heard of how we want to move ahead in the coming year.

2. We want to continue to provide quality worship experiences for folks both here and on-line;

- we want to seek out those looking for a relationship with God and welcome them into our community

- we want to continue to support our food programs and helping people in our community

- and we want to support our parish family in all the rich and varied ways that is St. Columba's.

3. And to do that – we need YOU.

4. We need you giving of your Time, your Talents, and your Treasure to make this work a reality.

5. Let us, like the Widow, put our whole faith and trust in God – that God will care for us – and bless the work we do – and the gifts we give.



The Widow's Mite

Let Us Pray

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN. (BCP p. 827)

