

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
10th November Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 388 870 372 75 327 865

INTROIT: Psalm 146

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!

Let me praise the LORD throughout my life; let me sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Do not trust in influential people, in a descendant of Adam, who cannot save.

His spirit will depart, he will return to his earth; on that day his plans will have perished.

Blessed is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help; whose hope is in the LORD his God, who has made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who remains faithful for ever, who provides justice for the oppressed; and who gives food to the hungry. The LORD causes prisoners to go free.

The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD raises up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves righteous people.

The LORD watches over the resident aliens. He comes to the aid of the orphan and the widow. But He makes the way of wicked people crooked.

The LORD will reign for ever; Your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

COLLECT: Almighty and ever-living God, You have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in You. Grant us so firmly to believe in Your Son Jesus that our faith may never be found wanting; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: 1 Kings 17:8-16 Elijah and the widow of Zarephath.
Hebrews 9:24-28 Christ's sacrifice takes away sins.
Mark 12:38-44 Warning against the Pharisees; and the widow's offering.

1 Kings 17:8-16

⁸ Then the Word of the LORD came to Elijah, saying: ⁹ “Move away! Go to **Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon**, and stay there! See! I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.”

¹⁰ He left and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the city, he saw a widow gathering sticks. He called to her and said: “Please fetch me a little water in a container that I may have a drink!”

¹¹ When she went to get it, he called out to her: “Please fetch me a small piece of bread in your hand!”

¹² She replied: “As surely as the LORD, your God, lives, I have no supplies at all, except a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive-oil in a jug. As you see, I am also gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and then die.”

¹³ Elijah told her: “Do not be afraid! Go and do as you have said! However, make me a little cake from it first and bring it out to me! After that you may make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, has said: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up, and the jug of olive-oil will not run dry until the day when the LORD sends rain on the land.’”

¹⁵ She went and did as Elijah had told her, and Elijah and the woman and her family had food for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of flour was not used up, and the jug of olive-oil did not run dry, according to the Word of the LORD, which He had promised through Elijah.

Hebrews 9:24-28

²⁴ For Christ has not gone into sacred places that have been made by hands, which are representations of the genuine ones. Rather, He has gone into heaven itself, where He now appears in the presence of God for us. ²⁵ Nor did He go in to offer Himself often, as the High Priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise He would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world. Instead, now He has appeared once, at the end of the ages, to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ Moreover, as it has been appointed for human beings to die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also has been sacrificed once to **“take away the sins of many people.”** He will appear a second time, dissociated from sin, to those who are eagerly waiting for Him, to bring salvation.

Mark 12:38-44

³⁸ As Jesus was teaching, He said, “Beware of the scribes, who want to walk around in long robes, to be greeted in the marketplaces, ³⁹ to sit in the chief seats in synagogues and to have the best places at dinners! ⁴⁰ They devour widows’ houses and, to put on a good appearance, they make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ As Jesus sat facing the contribution box, He was watching how the crowd was putting money into the contribution box. Many rich people were putting in large amounts. ⁴² A poor widow also came and put in two small copper coins, which make a quadrans. ⁴³ He summoned His disciples and told them, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others who were putting money into the contribution box. ⁴⁴ For they all have put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all that she had, everything she had to live on.”

HOW YOU GIVE

Sermon for the 25th Sunday after Pentecost 2024

Mark 12:38-44

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, Mark 12:38-44:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

A couple of weeks ago, we celebrated Harvest Thanksgiving.

In the Second Reading appointed for that day, Paul said, “*The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.* ⁷ *Each person should give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion! For God loves a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9:6). These verses underscore a key difference between believers living under the *old covenant* and those living under the *new covenant*. Believers under the old covenant lived under the law of the tithe. If they had asked, “*How much should I give?*” the answer would have been, “*God says that you must give back to Him one-tenth of what He gives you.*” Believers living under the new covenant are no longer under law but under grace. The Corinthians were living under the new covenant. If they, therefore, were to ask Paul, “*How much do you expect us to give?*” his response would have been what he writes in this verse: It is a matter of each one giving “*as he has decided in his heart.*” They were free to choose for themselves what amount to give.

Today, we have the opportunity to talk about *how* you give. Notice that I said, “how you give” rather than “what amount to give.” There’s a difference. How you give is much more important than how much you give—although how you give will almost assuredly affect how much you give. We are talking here about what we give in the offering plate and how we do it. What sort of attitude and motivation do we have in our giving? From God’s perspective, that is what’s most important when we put that envelope into the offering plate.

A prime example of this is the story of the poor widow, which is our Gospel reading today. We are told, “⁴¹ **As Jesus sat facing the contribution box, He was watching how the crowd was putting money into the contribution box. Many rich people were putting in large amounts. ⁴² A poor widow also came and put in two small copper coins, which make a quadrans.**” Copper coins were the smallest coins in use. The daily wage for a worker in those days was a denarius. A quadrans was worth 1/64th of a denarius. So, this widow’s contribution was tiny.

But from Jesus’ perspective—which is to say, from God’s perspective—this widow’s offering was indeed very much. It was the biggest and best offering anyone put in that day because of how it was given. Jesus “**summoned His disciples and told them, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others who were putting money into the contribution box. ⁴⁴ For they all have put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all that she had, everything she had to live on.**” Jesus commends this woman’s offering, and it serves as an example for us of how we should give with our offerings.

First, let’s talk about how we should not give.

First, we should not give to be seen by others to impress them with what a big giver we are and what a righteous person we are. That was something that Jesus criticised. In Matthew 6, He says: “*Beware of practising your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them*” (6:1). And He says that when you give, “*sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others*” (6:2). Rather, He tells us, His disciples, that when we give, “*do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing*” (6:3). In other words, don’t even brag to yourself about how much you give. Out of pride or for show is not the way to give.

Second, we should not give out of selective obedience.

By “selective obedience,” we mean obeying God in one part of our lives, say, in the matter of giving a sizable offering, but not obeying God in other areas of

our lives. Jesus again criticises the hypocrites for this very thing. The scribes and Pharisees were meticulous about giving a tithe as their offering, a tithe of 10%, even down to measuring out exactly 10% of the spices on their shelf. But while they obeyed God in this matter, at least in a surface fashion, they were not obeying God at all in matters like faith in God and love for others. And so, in Matthew 23, Jesus condemns them for this sort of “selective obedience.” He says, “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others*” (23:23).

So those are a couple of ways in which we should not give, namely, in order to be seen by others or out of selective obedience.

Let’s now look at ourselves and ask, “Do we ever do those things?” Ask yourself, do you take pride in how much you give, thinking to yourself, at least: “*Why, look at me! I’m such a big giver in this church. I bet I give more than most of the members here. What would the church do without me?*” That’s pride, and God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Or what about selective obedience? Do you faithfully put in your offering envelope every week, and even make up for it when you miss a Sunday—you do that on Sunday morning, but what are you doing on Monday afternoon? Or on Friday night? Are you living consistently, obeying God in all areas of life? If not, then you are a hypocrite, a sinner, deserving only God’s judgment, no matter how much you put in the offering plate.

And so now let’s turn to this widow and her giving. This will serve as an example for us, yes, but as we look a little deeper, we shall also find the mercy and the forgiveness and the help we are looking for.

Listen again: “**As Jesus sat facing the contribution box, He was watching how the crowd was putting money into the contribution box. Many rich people were putting in large amounts.** ⁴² **A poor widow also came and put in two small copper coins, which make a quadrans.** ⁴³ **He summoned His disciples and told them, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others who were putting money into the contribution box.** ⁴⁴ **For they all have put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all that she had, everything she had to live on.”**”

We see three things about this widow’s contribution: First, it was sacrificial. Second, she gave to the Lord for the work of His church. Third, she gave out of trust in the Lord to take care of her. Let’s look at these one at a time.

First, the widow's giving was *sacrificial*. She felt it. She would notice it. It was not an insignificant amount. It may have seemed insignificant compared to the large amounts that others could put in. But for her, this seemingly small offering loomed very large. A little becomes a lot when it consists of all you've got, and this was about all this poor widow had. For her, it was a huge sacrifice. But she gave it, nevertheless. It was sacrificial giving, and she wanted to do it.

Let's look at ourselves and how much we are giving. Do we even know how much we are giving, not just in terms of raw dollars, but what that represents, the proportion that our yearly offering total represents in relation to our income and assets? Is it sacrificial, or just a trivial amount when compared to what we have? Do we spend more on entertainment, for example, or on dining out than we do to support the work of the church? Then we may want to reexamine our giving. Sacrificial giving is the first thing we can learn from the widow's contribution.

Second, this poor widow was giving to the Lord and for the *work of His church*, which at that time meant giving to support the treasury of the temple.

In our day, the work of the church starts with the Sunday offering plate. But we are not just giving to a congregational budget. First of all, we are giving our offering to the Lord. Indeed, we are giving our whole selves to the Lord. We know who our Lord is, the good and merciful God who showers us with all His many blessings from day to day. This is the God who has forgiven us all our sins for Christ's sake., the God who strengthens and nourishes our faith through the ministry of this church. And this same God wants to bring this same saving gospel to others who need it, both here in our community and worldwide. This is our God, and that is the ministry of His church. This, then, is how we want to give our offerings: out of gratitude to our merciful Lord and to support the vital, life-giving ministry that only happens through the church's work.

The third thing we can learn from the widow's contribution is that she was giving out of *trust* in the Lord.

This widow was trusting in the Lord to take care of her, even as she was giving so much of what she had to live on. This is faith in action, and this is what Jesus commends. The poor widow knew who her God was and that He would take care of her, even if she did not know how, exactly, at the moment. As she threw those two small coins into the offering box, she was at the same time throwing herself into the merciful arms of her loving God.

And God never fails. "*Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you,*" says our Lord. And you, dear friends, you have the same God taking care of you that this

poor widow had. This is the God who looks after the widow and the fatherless, and He will take care of you, no matter what your situation.

How can we know that? Why should we trust in the Lord with all our hearts? The ultimate proof is in this Jesus, who commends the widow's faith here. Jesus, who just a few days after this, would give the greatest and most all-surpassing offering the world has ever seen. He would give Himself. Yes, God's own Son, Jesus Christ, would offer up His sinless body on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for all our sins. This was sacrificial giving, and only this sacrifice, Christ's holy blood, more precious than all the silver and gold in the world—only this sacrifice can suffice as the offering that makes all of our offerings acceptable to God. Christ's obedience to the Father's will is not selective but perfect and total. His righteousness avails for all. Jesus hung in shame on that cross for all the world to see. ***Look to Him and be saved.***

Here is the mercy and the forgiveness we need and are looking for. It is found only in Christ. Here is the help we need to do better in our giving. It is in Christ. Knowing that our future, both our future in this life and our eternal future—knowing that our salvation is safe and secure because of Christ, and therefore that God will never leave us or forsake us—knowing this, we can fully trust in God to take care of us, and that, in turn, will free up our ability and our willingness to give.

So you see, in the end, it isn't a matter of how much we give. It's a matter of *how we give*. And how we give—and then with it, how much we give—will be energised and renewed and refreshed by knowing how much God has given for us. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord our God, we praise You because You are the Rock of our salvation. You control the forces of nature in Your creation. Your name is holy; from one generation to another. You show mercy to those who trust and fear You. You bring down mighty kings from their thrones, and lift up the lowly. You fill the hungry with good things, and send the rich away with empty hands. We thank and praise You that You have rescued us from the power of darkness, and brought us safely into the kingdom of Your dear Son. By His death You have set us free from our sins; by His resurrection You have given us the sure hope of eternal life with You.

Increase the power of the Holy Spirit in us, that we may be able to escape from the corruption of this world, and avoid Your righteous wrath, that we may live as people whom You have graciously enlightened, in ways that are worthy of Jesus, our Saviour. Grant that, through Your Word, we may grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, know Your will better, and live as You desire. Use the difficulties in our lives to strengthen our faith and love. Make us wiser and more patient, and rich in brotherly kindness and compassion. Fill our hearts with constant awareness of Your generous love, that, as children of light, we may praise You through our lives.

Arouse Your Church, O Lord, that it may remember Your continual goodness. Cleanse, strengthen, and guide it, that it may indeed be Your holy people, as lights that shine in this world's darkness. Give it pastors who are faithful shepherds of Your flock. Put Your Word on their lips, that truth may triumph, and new life may increase among us.

Bless the preaching of the Gospel, that it may bear fruit and spread rapidly throughout the world. Move more and more to turn from their idolatry, rebellion, love of pleasure, and every other evil, and to look to Jesus Christ for life and light.

Look in compassion on the nations of the world. Exert Your gracious power in our land, that we may obey Your voice. Correct what is wrong in our society, and keep us safe from our enemies. Give our leaders wisdom and courage to rule justly, to uphold good and put down the evil, so that true worship and godliness may flourish. Bless our homes. Give all parents grace to lead their children to Jesus by the example of their own faith and life. Keep our homes free of all strife and conflict.

We ask for Your mercy for all who are sick and in need. Support them with Your strength, and deliver them by Your goodness, that they may rejoice in Your fatherly wisdom and care.

Grant that, equipped with the armour that You supply, we may be ready for the coming day of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it may not overtake us like a thief in the night. Grant that we may finally share in Your eternal kingdom of light, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: Why Do We Waste So Much Time Worrying?

We tend to worry about things like food, clothing, shelter, and money. Why? Well, we humans have a deep-rooted survival instinct that drives us to fear not having enough to make it. Furthermore, we all know that when resources are limited, people get competitive—things can become intense when everyone begins to grab resources for themselves. Ultimately, we worry because we want to be prepared for unexpected events.

We want to be ready for any threats that come our way. And so, we worry about things like food, clothing, shelter, and money. In fact, we can stockpile stuff like money, food, and clothes, giving way to hoarding. Yes, hoarders often have a deep-seated fear of losing control, being unprepared, or thinking that they may not have what they need in the future. The point is that we often live with insecurity in this life because life is, well... hostile. Disasters happen, resources are limited, and struggles occur. Don't believe me? Think back several years during Covid. Remember how people panicked with COVID-19 and bought up all the toilet paper and hand sanitisers! These panic purchases resulted in temporary shortages, creating even more fear and stress.

Now, is it wrong to do such things? Well, it depends. If you and I clamour, demand, and crave these things with fear running through our veins, then yes, we are sinning. We are functioning no different than pagans. You see, pagans function in this world as if there is no God. They operate as if there is no hope beyond what they can see, touch, and feel. And so, they will often put all their time and energy into acquiring as much clothing, shelter, money, and food as possible. But here is a little secret: they will never feel secure in this world, no matter how much they gather or stockpile. They will never feel confident or protected in this life. No amount of money, no amount of stockpiled food, and no amount of security cameras will grant a person security and confidence in this life. It doesn't work. Possessions will never bring complete confidence to you, me, or the pagans in this world.

So, if this is the case, what does bring us confidence and assurance in this world? In a word, the promises of God.

Consider our First Reading today from 1 Kings. Notice that the woman in the reading exists during a terrible famine in the land. She had absolutely nothing except a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive-oil in a jug. Long story short, when Elijah the prophet came to her, he asked the woman to bring him something to eat. Now, remember that all the woman had was a handful of bread and some oil. And so, she responded to Elijah, saying that she was in the process of gathering some sticks so that she could prepare her last meal with her son so that they could eat and then die. Elijah, though, responded to her and said, *"Do not be afraid! Go and do as you have said! However, make me a little cake from it first and bring it out to me! After that you may make something for yourself and your son."*¹⁴ *For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, has said: 'The jar of flour will not be used up, and the jug of olive-oil will not run dry until the day when the LORD sends rain on the land'"* (1 Kings 17:13-14).

And so, while having nothing, Elijah tells the woman not to fear and then gives her a promise from God. And with a faith that would scarcely have been found in Israel, she did just as Elijah asked. Despite having no resources and food amid a severe famine, she trusted in God's Word. She made the food for Elijah and trusted in God's word of promise.

It is extremely important to stress what we hear from 1 Kings because the point is that you and I should not put our heart's comfort and trust in food, clothing, shelter, and money—as if these are the things that will ultimately sustain you and me. Remember, the woman made the morsel of bread for Elijah precisely because she had a greater promise from God Himself. Again, the point is that we hold lightly to possessions such as food, clothing, money, and shelter, but we hold firmly to that which does not perish—the promises of God.

We belong to the Lord God. He cares for us more than you can ever care for yourself. The proof of His care is found in the cross of Christ and His Holy Word spoken to you. And so, today, it is pretty simple – why would you and I waste so much time engaging our attention and energy into worrying so much about food, clothing, shelter, and money, as if our worrying can add years to our lives? Why not leave these matters to God's providence and trust in what the Lord God has already promised and given to you and me?

But we may protest and say, “Time are tough. It has never been this bad before! Inflation is out of hand, war is around the corner, and evil is out of hand!”

Well, just think, “In times like these, we must remember that *there have always been times like these.*” In other words, the Lord God is in control. You belong to Him. Remember that the Lord has fed you all these years. He has sheltered you all these days. You have clothes on your body and safety right now. Indeed, the Lord has given you food, drink, clothing, shoes, a house, home, land, animals, money, goods, family, co-workers, judges, police, firefighters, good weather, peace, friends, pastors, and neighbours – to name a few. Furthermore, and most importantly, Christ has redeemed you from sin, death, and the devil. Christ has gone to prepare a place for you. He will not forsake you in death but will raise you on the last day. In the meantime, He has given you His Holy Word full of promises to grant you assurance to this day. He has invited you to His table to strengthen your faith. He has done all this and more for you, even without your prayers. Why? Because He knows what you need, and you are more precious to him than the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. And so, you do not need to worry because God has given you His kingdom through His Son, Jesus Christ, and that is what really matters. Do not fear. Take comfort in the promises of God that are for you.

Children's Message:

How many of you have gone on a long drive? Depending on how far you're driving, there can be a lot of signs telling you how far away you are from your destination. However, once you get to the place you're travelling, there's no need for any more road signs because you know you're there.

In the Old Testament, God had His people sacrifice lots of animals in their worship of Him. The author of Hebrews tells us that all of those animal



sacrifices were like these signs pointing to one destination: their fulfilment in Jesus. One of the most significant of these sacrifices was the offering on the Day of Atonement. Once a year, year after year, the high priest entered the innermost part of the Tabernacle, the Most Holy Place. There, he would offer the blood of an animal, sprinkling that blood on the mercy seat as a sin offering for himself and the people. God's forgiveness always and only came with blood being shed.

By themselves, though, these sacrifices could never forgive sins. They were only like a sign, pointing to something greater, something better, something perfect. That was the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross for the sins of the world.

The high priest had to enter the earthly temple every year for the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, but Jesus entered and appeared before the very presence of God just once. He presented his very own blood, and that was enough for a "once for all" perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb 9:26). Everything is complete! Nothing more needs to be done ever for forgiveness of your sins. No more sacrifices. We don't need the signs anymore. We're there! Jesus' blood covers all our sins—past and future! When we confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins—not because of anything we've done or will do, but because of the perfect sacrifice of His Son and His perfect blood, shed on the cross for you.

In Jesus, all the Old Testament sacrifices have reached their final destination. In Jesus, all the promises of God are fulfilled and complete. Therefore, Jesus invites us to look to nothing else and no one else but Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Thank You, Jesus, for being the one perfect sacrifice for me! Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

17 November 26 Pentecost	24 November Last Sunday of the Church Year	1 December 1 Advent (Year C)
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD LR (Pastor will be away this Sunday)	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 17 November		
READINGS: Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10:11-25; Mark 13:1-13		
HYMNS: 144 485 188 (290 292) 512		
Sunday, 24 November		
READINGS: Isaiah 51:4-6; Jude 20-25; Mark 13:24-37		
HYMNS: 272 735 (tune 508) 487 434		
Sunday, 1 December		
READINGS: Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 19:28-40		
HYMNS: 2 19 6 (840 334) 4		

BIBLE STUDIES:

Wednesday, 13 November, 7.30pm GRN.

Thursday, 14 November, 10.00am LOWOOD.

Friday, 15 November, 7.30am OAK/ AUB at Aubigny.

Sunday, 1 December, 8.00am TMBA.

Tuesday, 19 November, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Aubigny. Opening devotion: Grant.

Pastor's plans have changed, and will now be away from 21-28 November. During this time, if there is an emergency, please speak to your elders.