

Notes for Next Sunday

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (1 Kings 17:8-16). Through Elijah, the Lord miraculously provides food for a widow in Zarephath. This story illustrates God's never-ending goodness. He daily and richly provides for all our needs, blessings us far beyond what we deserve or what we ask.

Epistle (Hebrews 9:24-28). As elsewhere in Hebrews there is a comparison concerning Jesus and the OT people and rituals. Here Jesus compared to the sacrifices the priest made as to Jesus being the one and only sacrifice for all time. It ends with the promise that Jesus will appear again to get the ones who have been waiting for him.

Gospel (Mark 12:38-44). This text includes two narratives: The warning against the influence of the scribes and the Widow's mite. They are a comparison of what the actions of those in powerful positions as opposed to the faith-filled action of the lowly widow.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – 1 KINGS 17:8-16

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, 9 “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” 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 flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. 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, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. 14 For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, 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 flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

17:9 *Zarephath of Sidon.* A coastal town located between Tyre and Sidon in the territory ruled by Jezebel's father Ethbaal (16:31). Elijah is commanded to go and reside in the heart of the very land from which the Baal worship now being promoted in Israel had come. (CSB)

widow. Jesus' only excursion beyond the borders of ancient Israel was “to the region of Tyre and Sidon,” where He, too, met a Syrophenician woman of great faith (Mk 7:24–30). (TLSB)

17:12 *as the LORD your God lives.* Her oath in the name of the Lord was either an accommodation to Elijah, whom she recognized as an Israelite, or a genuine expression of previous knowledge of and commitment to the God of Israel. (CSB)

17:13 *first make a small cake of bread for me ... then make something for yourself and your son.* As a prophet, Elijah's words are the command of the Lord. The widow is asked to give all she has to sustain the bearer of the word of God. The demand to give her all is in essence the demand of the covenant that Israel had broken. (CSB)

17:14 *thus says the Lord.* Elijah can tell the widow “Don’t be afraid” (v. 13) because the demand of the covenant is not given without the promise of the covenant. The Lord does not ask more than he promises to give. (CSB)

17:15 *did as Elijah said.* By an act of faith the woman received the promised blessing. Israel had forsaken the covenant and followed Baal and Asherah in search of prosperity. Now in the midst of a pagan kingdom a widow realized that trustful obedience to the word of God is the way that leads to life. (CSB)

17:16 *jar of flour was not spent.* God miraculously provided for this non-Israelite who, in an act of faith in the Lord’s word, had laid her life on the line. He gave her “manna” from heaven even while he was withholding food from his unfaithful people in the promised land. The warning of Dt 32:21 was being fulfilled (cf. Ro 10:19; 11:11, 14). (CSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrew 9:24-28

24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, 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 places every year 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 ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. **27** And just as it is appointed for man 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.

9:26 *once for all.* Christ’s sacrifice is perfect and finished. It is repeated neither in the Holy Supper nor in the suffering of believers. Instead, in the Lord’s Supper we eat and drink His body and blood, already sacrificed once, and we receive the benefits of His sacrifice (forgiveness, life, and salvation). Therefore, the Spirit conforms our lives to His life so that we offer to Him sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Luther: “That, I say, is our gospel, that Christ has made us righteous and holy through that sacrifice and has redeemed us from sin, death, and the devil and has brought us into his heavenly kingdom. We have to grasp this and hold it fast through faith alone.... All our own works undertaken to expiate sin and escape from death are necessarily blasphemous. They deny God and insult the sacrifice that Christ has made and disgrace his blood, because they try thereby to do what only Christ’s blood can do” (AE 36:313). (TLSB)

9:27 *it is appointed for man to die once...comes the judgment.* As in the natural order man dies once (v. 27; as a consequence of sin, Ro 5:12), so Christ died once as the perfect sacrifice for sin (v. 28). And as, after death, man faces judgment, so Christ, after his death, will appear again, bringing salvation (see next note) from sin and its judgment. (CSB)

9:28 *will appear a second time.* He comes without our sins (Is. 53:6), which He bore as a heavy load (John 1:29) when the father made Him to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Also, He comes not in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), but in the majesty of His transfigured body (Mt 24:30; Php 3:21). (TLSB)

waiting for him. As the Israelites waited for the high priest while he was in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement (see 2Ti 4:8; Tit 2:13). (CSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 10:46-52

38 And in his teaching he said, **“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have 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.”**

12:38-40 Jesus warns against using self-serving religion to elevate ourselves above others. Clergy especially need to listen to Jesus at this point. Jesus shows all religious leaders and scholars the model for their leadership: humility, service, for His sacrifice has atoned for us all. (TLSB)

1 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small 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 offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

12:41-44 Jesus uses the sacrifice of a widow to illustrate for His disciples the character of absolute dependence on God. Wealth and possession can pose a spiritual threat – wealth has a way of owning its possessor. Jesus’ love and sacrifice motivate us to offer our whole lives to Him as our daily offering of gratitude. He gave up everything, including His life, on the cross for us. (TLSB)