

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today's gospel lesson shows us a woman of great faith. A poor, actually destitute woman – the English translation is a little softer than the Greek, came to the temple in the midst of many rich people to give her offering. The temple treasury was largely supported by the rich who could easily give large sums. The woman gave two copper coins that were worth less the amount of a penny today. She gave literally all that she had. She gave everything to God. She knew that God loved her and cared for her. Jesus' response to her actions was "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. 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."

I'm awe struck each time I read this story. This woman gave all that she had to the temple treasury. She knew that she was a child of God. Her priority was to give back to God what he had given to her. What a model of discipleship for us. Harper Collins Bible Commentary says that the woman's "action has been invoked as a symbol of wholehearted discipleship, generosity, and unquestioning surrender." She is a wonderful example for us of what it means to be a disciple. She gives her whole life to God.

Today we will be voting on our budget for next year. As we do this, we need to think and pray about our individual giving and our priorities. The woman of mite gave all that she had to live on. I'm not asking us to do that. I'm asking that we pray and discern what our priorities are. Are there some things that we can live without for the kingdom cause? I know for me personally, I can probably live without having some books and movies that are on my gotta have list. What are things that we can do to help the kingdom cause by supporting ministries of Saint Nicholas? One is supporting the budget. The

support that we give provides for ministries that reach many people; our children, their parents; grandparents, individuals, couples, and those who have not heard the gospel of Christ.

Others are setting our priorities towards the work of God. It's about using our God given gifts and talents to help others, to be servants to all people in the name of God. We are disciples. We are to give ourselves to God for his work in the world. Our mission statement sums things up so well: "We are growing and empowering disciples of Jesus Christ for the ministries of God's work in the world."

We are voting on a budget for Saint Nicholas Lutheran Church, yes, but we are doing something much larger than that. We are committing ourselves, our time, talents, and resources to God, to the kingdom cause through the ministries of Saint Nicholas, the Metro DC Synod, and the ELCA.

Voting on a budget is a commitment. It's a huge leap of faith, as is any ministry. We should try to remember that in times when we don't feel that we have the means to make ends meet, that God is there guiding us and helping us.

God calls us to be disciples, to set our priorities in life towards him, towards the kingdom that is here and the kingdom that is yet to come. It's the kingdom of already, but not yet. Jesus Christ has broken down the barriers and God's kingdom is working in our earthly world with the hope of Christ coming again. We are called to be disciples in this kingdom, to do things for the kingdom's sake, not our own. It's hard. It's difficult to be a disciple and to go against the grain.

Jesus tells us not to worry about what we will drink and what we will wear in Matthew 6. He reminds us to “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

The destitute woman in this story does just as Jesus describes to us to strive for the kingdom of God. She gives literally all that she has to the temple treasury; she gives back the gifts that God has given her. She gave what she had to live on. She had nothing more. She had hope that God would provide for her. What faith this woman had. Her treasure was in God. Jesus tells us where your treasure is, is where your heart lies.

God will provide our daily needs. He’ll be with us in every step each day of our lives. We are called and claimed by God in the waters of baptism to be disciples. What are our priorities? Is God’s kingdom one of our priorities or this world? What is our treasure? Is it God, or is it something else? It’s difficult to be disciples ~ to serve others and to be good stewards. As we anticipate and pray about the future, let us be inspired by the widow’s mite as individuals and as a congregation and give our lives to God.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.