**Written Copy “Giving from Faith” 1 Kings 17:12-15 and Mark 12:44**

Proper 27 Pentecost 25

Veterans Day Sunday November 11th, 2018

**Text: 1 Kings 17:12-15 and Mark 12:44**

12 And she said “As Yahweh your God is living, I do not have that provision, only the fullness of the hollow of the hand (a handful) in the jar of flour and a little oil in the jug. Behold: I am gathering two pieces of wood, and I will go, and I will make provision for me and for my son. We will eat it and then we will die. 13 And Elijah said to her: “Do not be afraid. Go! Make provisions according to your word. However before you do that fix for me from the first batch a small cake of bread and bring it out to me. Then afterword make provision for you and your son. 14 For Yahweh, the God of Israel thus says: ‘The Jar of flour will not come to an end and the flask of oil will not decrease until a day Yahweh will give rain over the surfaces of the land.’” 15 And she went, and she fixed provision according to the word of Elijah. And she ate, and he ate, and her family ate for (many) days.

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."

**Exegetical Statement**

As the famine that the LORD sent in response to the Northern Kingdom’s idolatry continues, He sends His prophet Elijah into Gentile territory to a widow who He has commanded to be Elijah’s providential care. Elijah encounters her at the city gate as she gathers wood for what she believes to be her final meal before she and her son die. Elijah first asks for water, and when she is on her way to get some, he adds the request for a morsel of bread. She then, addressing him as a follower of “the LORD your God” reveals that she only has enough for one final meal for herself and her son. Elijah tells her not to be afraid. Go ahead and make the fire to cook for you and your son. But use that last bit of flour and oil and make him a small cake first. If she will do this God promises that her supply of flour and oil will not run out as long as the famine is in the land. She complies with this request and the LORD’s promise to her, to her son, and to Elijah is fulfilled. Her supply of flour is never used up and her oil jug never empties throughout the remainder of the famine.

**Focus Statement:**

Christ came to give what we could not: He came to give the perfect sacrifice to God which covers and forgives all the ways we give from abundance and not out of love. He sends His Spirit into our hearts to teach us how to be more faithful stewards (managers) of the all the wealth God gives-especially the most valuable gift that is the Gospel. As we do on-the job learning Christ is patient and merciful to keep forgiving and encouraging us to live out our faith

**Function Statement:**

**Why it’s important to know**:

We tend to give from our abundance. We steward our time, talents, and treasures with regard to what we can comfortably afford to part with. After all it’s ours to do with as we desire. Our sinful hearts always fight against Christ’s call to be living sacrifices of all that God has given us, including our lives

**What the hearer should do as a result**:

Through careful meditation and prayer struggle with the Holy Spirit on what He is calling each to give, not just in treasure, but all the gifts that God has blessed us with. Pray about what part they can play in the ongoing ministry that our Church is doing, not just on Sunday but with Franklin Mission or helping develop a greater partnership with Love INC. and Wellspring.

**Subject Sentence: Giving out of faith, not from abundance**

When my son Derek was in 8th grade at Living Word Lutheran School he got to go on their 8th grade trip to Washington DC. And I got to go as a chaperone. It was a very memorable trip. But one of the most moving memories was Arlington National Cemetery. On holidays such as Veterans Day you will see lots of pictures of the gravestones that populate Arlington. But even more somber and moving for me was standing there overlooking the rolling hills and seeing row after row, grave after grave, honoring those who served our country in the Armed Forces. It’s one thing to give lip service to the sacrifice many men and women have made in the name of freedom, it’s quite another to have it impressed upon you in such as powerful way. And I am very grateful for all of those who have given their lives in service to our country.

But not just them. I’m also very grateful for those of you here today who have given a portion of your life to serve in the armed forces both in peace time and in war time. I believe there is a great need during both times for a standing army. I have never served myself. I briefly thought about the Marines as I was graduating from High School but ended up not enlisting. But because many of you did choose to serve, or went in response to the draft, I was spared from being forced to enlist. And for that I am also very grateful to you.

I’ve recently finished watching Ken Burns documentary series on World War II, as well as reading a short article on the basic timeline of the Vietnam War. Both impress upon me that the survivors of these wars sacrificed more than years of their lives. They sacrificed the health of their body and or the health of their mind and spirit. War is hell and it has lasting effects on those who were called to fight. The sacrifice these men and woman were called to give was indeed costly. And we pray for all those still struggling with the aftereffects.

Our Old Testament Lesson describes a steep sacrifice of a different kind. It describes the sacrifice of a Widow Women who the prophet Elijah encounters at the gate of the city of Zarephath. She is gathering sticks of wood to make a fire in order to cook the last of the food she has for herself and her son. Following that she sees only death coming next. Elijah is there because the LORD sent him to this woman. Elijah is in hiding from the wicked King of the Northern Kingdom Ahab and his even more wicked Queen Jezebel. They had introduced worship of the false god Baal as the one who makes the rains come. In response to His people being led astray the LORD sent Elijah to announce a drought in the land until the LORD Himself decides to bring the rain. The LORD will withhold the rain until the proper time when He, through His servant Elijah will prove who it is that He alone is God who provides daily bread for His people. It is to this woman God sent Elijah telling him that by His command this Gentile woman from outside His Covenant people will provide food and water for Elijah while he awaits the time for the final showdown with the prophets of Baal that is to come.

Elijah first calls to her to bring some water, and she obediently heads out to do so. But the request that immediately follows halts her in her tracks. Elijah asks that she also bring him a morsel of bread. She replies that a morsel of bread is all that she has flour and oil to make. Not even enough for a meal for herself and her son. They are facing starvation and this man asks her to fork over the last bit of food she has? Who is this widow that the LORD sent His prophet to? Why to her; one who can’t even support herself let alone another mouth?!

But the LORD has reasons that are beyond her understanding. Through Elijah He tells her (**1 Kings 17:13-14**) “**Do not be afraid!” Go and do as you have said. You will prepare dinner for yourself and your son. But before you do, use that last of your flour and oil that you currently have and make me a small cake of bread. Then bring it to me. For the one and only true LORD, the God of Israel declares that your jar of flour will not run empty nor your jug of oil run dry until the day He will bring rain again on the land.”**

Now she has a choice to make. She can tell him to get lost and make her last meal before she and her son die. Or she can obey Elijah hoping that the miracle he announced comes true. In her place what would you choose? Every single one of us left to ourselves would refuse to help Elijah. It is the state of all humanity’s sinful heart. To make your last bit of food for a stranger offering a promise that cannot be verified makes no logical sense. The only way she or you or I could obey is through the gift of faith. She gave what she had sacrificially through the gift of faith the LORD had given her as His chosen instrument in the mission work of Elijah. And through that faith came the blessing that God had promised. Food enough to last. And the opportunity to be a part of God’s mission work and children united by faith.

As members of His Church Militant on earth, called into the spiritual battle that we’ve been sealed in faith for, given the armor of faith for, we are called at times to give sacrificially from what God has given us. Not giving from our abundance. But a giving based on the faith He gives to us as His gift through Christ. And often we find ourselves failing to live up to the example this Widow Woman set. We read the of another Widow in our Gospel Lesson who also gave not out of abundance but gave all that she had. And we worry: “What if Christ was calling us to do the same?”

Jesus knows how we struggle to be the managers of the resources He has blessed us with. He knows that this side of eternity we will never be the perfect stewards of the abundance that He gives to us. It’s the reason He came to earth. He came to give that which we never could. He came to give His life in the place of ours. He came to suffer for our disobedience to God’s call to share the gifts He gives with those around us. Jesus set aside all that He had as God the Son, took on our humanity, and lived the same kind of life you and I live. Except He was willing to give to others what He had out of a heart of love. A heart of faithful obedience to His Father that should’ve earned Him life but instead led to His death. His death in place of our death. And from the cross He continued to give the most precious gifts that you and I could ever receive: forgiveness for all of our sinful disobedience, salvation and eternal life. Every act of selfishness you and I have committed has not only been forgiven but forgotten by God because of Christ. Even those we continue to do today and tomorrow. They are washed away by the blood Jesus shed on the cross. The blood of God Himself who set aside His humanity so that His death and resurrection would be the cure for all that separates us from God now and into eternity. And through the Spirit given in our Baptism He provides the faith that is essential to us holding fast to Christ. As well as turning from our selfishness daily to learning how to be the kind of steward of God’s gifts Christ desires us to be.

And what kind of a steward is that? How does He desire we manage all the gifts that He gives? In **Romans 12:1** Paul tells us “**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship**”. He comes to us just as He did the widow of Zarephath and calls us by faith in Christ into His mission work going on at the congregation to which He has called you. As a sealed member of His Church Militant active here on earth He calls you and I to serve Him through all the gifts that He has given us. Through the gift of time that we have even as we live out our vocational responsibilities to our family and friends. Through tall the talents and spiritual gifts He has given us that benefit not only those we work with but also our brothers and sisters in faith here, and the outreach missions He has called us to be a part of: Franklin Mission and other opportunities to share Christ’s love in the Flint area that we will be a part of next year. That through the faithful sharing of our treasures, our tithes and offerings given in the service of the Gospel those in need might have their needs met, and in doing so we might be able to share our Savior. In all these things we give as “living sacrifices”; knowing by faith that all we have really belongs to Him and that He desires us to share it. This is not giving from abundance. It does involve sacrifice. Not the sacrifice of your life. Christ gave that sacrifice. Not giving until you are in poverty. That’s not the point of the widow in our Gospel Lesson. It’s a giving from faith. Faith that understands its really not ours, its His. Faith that understands none of us live up to being the stewards we ought, but instead are forgiven stewards through Christ.

Many of you answered the call of sacrifice to serve our country and we are very grateful you did. All of you have been called by the Gospel into service in the LORD’s army: The Church Militant. We are called to share Christ’s love and our faith with one another to build each other up in order that we can go out and serve Him wherever we go. He calls each one of us to do our part in this mission according to all the gifts that He has given us in our time, our talents, and our treasures. Each one of us is called to serve in different ways. But all of us are called to help with the work of the Church. We are called daily to examine our lives of sacrificial service and ask the Spirit to not only forgive our shortcomings but how we can be better stewards. To sit down in prayerful meditation and ask Him: “How can I be your servant for sharing the Gospel through word and action where Jesus is already working with us?” Especially we ask and pray that the faith we have received might be the source and guide for faithful giving out of love for Christ, and the love He shares with us for each other Amen