

# **“A Widow’s Provision”**

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
Psalm 146, Hebrews 9:24-28, Mark 12:38-44

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From the Pulpit

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Good Morning Beloved!

A few weeks ago, I attended The Ohio State University Well-being summit. A group of professionals, including physicians, nurses, researchers, writers, and more, came together to discuss the well-being of people in healthcare and the well-being of people in general.

A friend of mine Richard Thompson, who is a researcher at Ohio State University and a chaplain, submitted a body of work that I assisted him with this past year.

This body of work includes research about the impact Spiritual health on grief, addiction recovery and more.

**One of our takeaways from studying, addiction, spirituality and grief includes that Grief patterns appeared to be connected to spiritual development. A healthy spirituality leads to healthy grief. Spirituality is a nebulous concept, so the research used specific models of how to examine spirit. Worldview, belonging, self-understanding, community. A healthy spiritual worldview helps our recovery and grief and betters our overall health. This jumped out at me considering Joanna’s sermon on grief last week.**

One of the other speakers at the event taught a session on storytelling and the importance of the story we tell ourselves daily, in adversity and in times of joy.

We increase our effectiveness when we tell ourselves stories that are lifegiving, stories of how we made it through something difficult, how we persevere.

Examples about kids.

Storytelling shapes our worldview, our resilience and our behavior.

The only thing about the conference that was missing for me, was how to apply this as a Christian. Scripture provides us so many stories that shape how we see the world and engage our grief/loss and more. We have a whole example of what this research talks about right here in today's scripture.

And this is the example of the Widow. How the widow's worldview and reliance on storytelling impacts her behavior and expression of faith. We see widows in scripture, working through strife with faith. God Protecting them and calling out this vulnerable group time and time again. The widow represents us and others, a person in grief, in loss, in struggle.

This church recently had a pastor retire. For better, for worse, this is much like being a widow. A long-term relationship has ended. We have all of the feelings, ranging from anger, resentment, to relief, deep sadness, fear, and anxiety, and more.

I sat across from a made widow in the hospital conference room. It could've been yesterday; it could've been last year. She looked at me and asked me what she was going to do? How was she going to tell her kids, how was she going to move forward, how was she supposed to function, how was she supposed to pay the bills?

The widow is real. She is us. She is our friend. She is our neighbor. And God has something to say to us through her. Through her story in Mark. Through her faithful worldview.

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*Let us pray: Lord God of the universe. Hide me behind the cross that we experience s word from you Lord. In Jesus name Amen.*

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This week we had the election; some people are celebrating, and some people are lamenting. I have had an influx of messages with people who have who have worry concerns, belly deep anxieties, and disillusionment. Again, this reminds me of the widow in today's scripture.

In the scripture today we can go many directions. But The Lord wants us to consider the worldview of the widow, her understanding of where her help comes from.

We see her in verse 44. "For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but out of her poverty she has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

She gave all she had. She appears to have nothing. Why would she make such an offering? Because she trusts God and God's sustenance. Why? Easy, because the widow in Mark would have known her scripture.

She would have known her stories about the faithfulness of God. She would have known about Ruth, and she would have known about God's provision for the widows in the Old Testament.

She is not trusting out of blindness but trusting through the knowledge passed down from generation to generation the stories and the scriptures that tell us about the nature of the God that we serve.

Her Spiritual Worldview is one of PROVISION.

She would have known about **1 Kings 17:8-16**, *God feeds Elijah and the widow*. 17:8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 17:9 Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there, for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.

17:10 So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." 17:11 As she was going to

bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” 17:12 But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.”

17:13 **Elijah said to her, “*Do not be afraid*;** 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.” 17:14 For thus says the LORD the God of Israel “The jar of meal will not be emptied, and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth.”

17:15 She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. 17:16 The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Beloved. The jar of meal was not emptied. That’s the story from which the widow is living, grieving, and emptying her purse.

**Also, our widow in Mark would have known about the story of Ruth. And that Boaz is the kinsman redeemer for Naomi and Ruth. A family member who steps in to provide, protect and support. The widow’s provision is the God who sends us a kinsman redeemer. And who is this?**

A kinsman redeemer is a close relative who acts on behalf of a family member in need. In the Old Testament, the role of a kinsman redeemer is described in Leviticus 25. The kinsman redeemer’s responsibilities include:

- Providing for the family’s needs
- Protecting the family’s identity and interests
- Taking on the family’s obligations
- Defending the family

Mark's widow would have anticipated the Messiah promised in scripture, the one who is sent by God to be our redeemer.

So not only is she living from the past story of God's provision. But she's living in anticipation of a future story of provision and blessing. All of this she is doing by emptying her pockets into the treasury. Giving all she has because she trusts that God has more for her. Trusts because of the worldview she has and the stories she knows in her bones.

**Hebrews 9:24-28 *The sacrifice of Christ* 9:24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, **but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.****

9:25 Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the holy place year after year with blood that is not his own; 9:26 for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. 9:27 And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once and after that the judgment, 9:28 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.

**Christ is our redeemer. He is the one who provides for us and protects us.**

And remember from last week's scripture and sermon, Jesus wept. He knows our strife and our pain. We can rely on a God who not only provides us Jesus, but also empathizes and cares for us.

Remember that in the true Kingdom of Heaven everything is in reverse from the human realm. The last shall be first.

The widow's worldview of God's abundant provision is the true example of discipleship, not the scribes' worldview of image and power which is built on a human scarcity mindset.

When the human realm has us feeling anxieties, fears, and lack of resource, we as Christians are meant to see this as an invitation. This doesn't mean we deny our feelings, it means we lean into the embrace of God and remember the story of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Today, no matter how we are feeling, **are we relying on the stories about the nature of God. Are we drawing strength from a God who consistently tells us not to fear? Be not afraid when your resources run low. Be not afraid when you see an obstacle in your path.**

**This is the worldview from which we are invited to grieve, from which we are invited to live in joy and pain. The earthly failures of this world are an invitation to come close to the breast of God. To seek relationship. And the rest will come.**

**Shall we too trust in the widow's provision?**

As a church focused on social justice, our goals are always to serve the underserved, to advocate whenever possible. AND radical love, includes the faith that is rooted in the source of power itself. Radical Love is rooted in absolute trust and belief in the Love that God has for us. That is what makes us capable of sharing it with others. First God gives to us, we are connected to God. And we are sustained. Now we can bear fruit that is for others.

That is where peace resides. And I'm not just saying that, again, the research backs it up. The stories we tell ourselves, the stories we believe about who we are, impact our daily wellbeing, our ability to process grief, our ability to be resilient, our ability to feel refreshed rather than burnt out. That's why it's important also to be careful what you watch, what you listen to, what you decide to come into agreement with.

**Application** - What is one way we can move toward growing our faith in God's provision? One way is to be like the widow in this story.

At the wellbeing summit they called it "vitamin G" -- There's all the research about how gratefulness transforms our brain.

## Gratitude.

This week find one thing that GOD has provided to you. Bless it and lift a “thank you.” A story of gratitude is always one that puts us on the right track with our faith in Christ. Pick any provision, any blessing. Trust that story.

And then if you are a pro at GOD Gratitude, consider what it would be like to thank God this week for the provision that is coming. Start to ANTICIPATE the good things that God has in store for you. How might you be different, at school, at work, with you friends, if you trust the story of God’s coming provision? God will never make us a widow, God is eternal.

We always have access to God and life abundantly though Jesus. Fear not. God provides, God is with you.

Amen.