

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Sacrificial & Holy

Sermon Reflection Notes

Pastor Ron prefaced his sermon yesterday with “a few pastoral words”. He acknowledged the election this past week, and he observed the way our congregation showed up on Wednesday Evening following the election. We showed up with emotions that were raw with pain and grief. We showed up with feelings of satisfaction and even hopefulness. Pastor Ron offered two ways we are all called to respond to the election.

1. First, check on your friends – especially if this election has the possibility of having a direct effect on their lives. Hold each other in your heart with compassion and love.
2. Second, remember that we are baptized members of the church. Remember that the church was born under a brutal government that oppressed the work of the church. In 2024 the church needs to be vital, articulate, and courageous.

And finally Pastor Ron reminded us of the promises we make every time we renew our baptismal covenant. We are called to make the world more just, more peaceful, for loving, more kind, by living out our covenant of baptism.

In the sermon text, from Mark 12:38-44, Jesus was in Jerusalem teaching in the temple. He observed the scribes who, as religious leaders, liked to be recognized, liked to be seen as people of authority, and enjoyed all the privileges of their rank as clergy. Pastor Ron suggested that any of us might be a person who enjoys a metaphorical vestment of privilege, wealth, and authority. It is not a condemnation of leadership. It is, instead, a condemnation of people who use authority and wealth for themselves, and who ignore the plight of neighbors who do not have even what is necessary for life – shelter, food, access to health care, etc.

As Jesus continued watching the going and coming near the temple offering boxes, a poor widow showed up, and it was evident that she put two coins into the offering box. She gave all she had. Jesus praised her offering and proclaimed that her gift was more than all the others who were giving more. She gave more than others who gave out of their abundance. The poor widow gave all. And yet, as Jesus observed - those who gave out of their abundance could not see the needs of the widow. Jesus questioned the systemic reality where some have too much and others do not have enough.

Scripture

Mark 12: 38-44 (NRSVUE)

³⁸ As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces ³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! ⁴⁰ They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ 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."

Discussion Questions

1. With respect for the understanding that we may have voted last Tuesday in different ways, what are the ways you have found to care for yourself during the past week? What has been helpful to you?
2. Pastor Ron invited us to remember that we are baptized, and that we are called to live out of the promises of our baptism. That means to:
Renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin.

To accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice and oppression.

To confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord.

To be in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.

Was it helpful to be invited to remember our baptism? How was it helpful? If it was not helpful, why not?

3. Last week we discussed what it means to be a person of hope, and not a person filled with fear? Do we have new thoughts about that this week?
4. Jesus was in Jerusalem – the governmental seat of power and the religious seat of power. He especially observed and commented on the practices of religious leaders. Where do we find ourselves wearing the "vestments" of power and authority? As individuals, as church people, as a nation? How are we called to be self-reflective about our own power?
5. Pastor Ron also asked us to imagine those places where we have a scarcity of courage, a scarcity of feeling accepted, a scarcity of assurance that we are loved, a scarcity of good health. What would it mean to offer those small coins of scarcity to God? If we gave all of that to God, what could possibly change?

6. What else about this sermon gave you “food for thought”?

Closing Prayer

Holy and gracious God, we are a strange mixture of loss and of hope. As we are able, we submit our losses to you. As we are able, we submit our hopes to you. We know that all too often we are focused on ourselves, and we want to be in control. We watch in dismay when we see leaders in our church, in our nation, in our world who covet self and control over others. But we also remember that our future is held in your good hands, that our hope is filled with promises of well-being, justice, and mercy. And so, we pray this day that you will move us out beyond our fear and anxiety. We pray for your kingdom to come on earth, even as it is in heaven. We pray, trusting that Jesus is Lord, and Jesus is with us. Amen.

“Giving sacrificially is love in action!”