



Order of Service
7th November 2021

Introit: 738 (TiS) 'My Jesu, my Saviour'

Welcome:

Acknowledgement:

I pay my respect to the traditional custodians of the land in which I live, work and worship. To the elders and members of the Bangarang people of the Yorta Yorta nation past, present and emerging.

I pledge myself to the work of reconciliation between the first people and those who have come to call this land their home.

Call to Worship:

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.

It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved. (Psalm 127: 1-2)

Let us worship God.

Hymn: 52 (TiS) 'Let us sing to God of salvation'.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

Gracious God, the food which we eat is your gift, O God, and our hearts are filled with thanksgiving. The love which comes to us when life seems empty and futile is your gift, O God. As the birds soar in flight, so our lives are lifted high by your compassion. As flowers break forth from buds of promise, we thank you for new beginnings. As the earth itself refreshes the seeds, we thank you for your encouragement.

O God, there is never a time when we do not grieve something in our lives and how we live. Sometimes our regret is for things done or left undone, in our personal journeys. Sometimes we are aware that, even as your church, we have fallen short of your hopes for us.

Breathe new life into our living this day.

Forgive us if we exclude anyone from your grace. Remind us that we ourselves may only approach your holiness through the kindness of your heart and that we may never turn anyone away in self-righteousness. Forgive us when we are less than we long to be.

Breathe new life into us today.

If we place conditions on our openness to others, refusing to hear your voice from those we do not know or closing off possibilities of new insights because they are unfamiliar or do not suit us.

Forgive us when we are less than what we ought to be, O God.

Breathe new life into our lives this day. Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness:

As we sit at the feet of our God, a hand of love is stretched out to hold us all. We wait in faith to receive the wondrous offer of grace. We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Doxology: 768 (TiS) 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow'.

Readings: Hebrews 9: 24-28, Mark 12: 28-34



Hymn: 223 (TiS) 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds'.

Sermon: 'The greater giver'.

"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 find this text rather disturbing. What is Jesus talking about? I have been a minister all these years, the sacrifices, the pain, the loneliness, the long hours, and all the other stuff that comes with ministry. You give what you have, you give who you are, but still, deep down inside, I know I am giving out of my abundance – and that makes this text uncomfortable for me at least.

Furthermore, the text tells us that she puts in all that she had to live on. In our day and age, our culture and our lifestyle, this will not go down too well for many. Maybe I can come up with some rational explanation as to why I should not give all that I have to live on. And, she did her giving incognito. No one saw her and what she did except Jesus of course. But then, that was her life. No one sees her, who she is and what she does even and her giving to the temple treasury.

It is a far cry from our time. Because for many, if they give anything at all, they would like it to be recognised, acknowledged and be rewarded for it. They would like people to appreciate what they do and perhaps congratulate them for it.

Let us look at the what is happening here. Jesus is still in the temple teaching where a large crowd had gathered to hear. "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, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! They devour widow's houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive greater condemnation."

Maybe that is why Jesus saw the widow. He was contrasting the gifts of the scribes to this particular widow. The gifts of the privileged to that of the status less. The gifts of the respected to that of the lowest rung in society. The gifts of those in power to that of the powerless.

Watching the widow and the scribes giving their gifts to the temple treasury reminded Jesus of what the Scripture teaches about God, and what God said about widows. "You shall not take advantage of any widow or fatherless child. If you take advantage of them at all, and they cry at all to me, I will surely hear their cry (says the Lord)." (Exodus 22: 22-23) "When you reap your harvest...beat your olive tree...harvest your vineyard, you shall not glean it after yourselves: it shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless, and for the widow." (Deuteronomy 24: 19-20) "Learn to do well. Seek justice. Relieve the oppressed. Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1: 17) "Yahweh preserves the foreigners. He upholds the fatherless and widow, but the way of the wicked he turns upside down." (Psalm 146: 9)

In the New Testament, Jesus took pity on a widow in the village of Nain when he saw that her son had died leaving her defenceless and destitute, he raised the boy from the dead and gave him back to his mother. (Luke 7: 12-15)

Jesus saw in this widow what God had expected from the scribes. We do not know what the widow was thinking when she gave up all that she had to live on, nor do we know where she went after she gave her gift to the temple treasury but that is exactly, I believe what Jesus is teaching us today. **THE ONLY TREASURES WE GET TO KEEP IN THIS LIFE ARE THOSE THAT WE GIVE AWAY!**

We can amass a fortune in this life, but we can't take it with us. Even while we are living, our riches won't bring us the lasting happiness we think we can get. But the things we give away are ours to keep forever. The joy of knowing that someone is blessed by our generosity, that others are cooled under the shade of the tree you planted.

Lastly, of course, is that Jesus saw in the giving of the widow his own impending death on the cross. When he saw the widow uncurling her tired and nervous fingers from her two copper coins, it reminded him of uncurling his own fingers

from his own life. To give everything that he had and everything that he is. Like the widow who gave everything she had to live on, he is to give his own life.

The widow is giving her two copper coins to a corrupt institution, Jesus is to give his life to a sinful world. The willingness of the widow to give to God all she had; Jesus gives his life as faithfulness to God. The willingness of the widow to give her all is her source of strength and self-respect which cannot be taken away.

When we give, not out of our abundance, but out of our living, God blesses us in ways far greater than we can ever imagine.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn: 599 (TiS) 'Take my life and let it be'.

Notices:

Offering:

In thankfulness, we offer you our gifts, O God. Receive them in the spirit in which they are given and call us on to greater generosity in your name.

Amen.

Prayers of the People:

O Holy Spirit pray for us when we have few words and when our faith is limited by our humanness or diminished by discouragements and unanswered questions.

We so often find our lives running in streams of effort which seems to bear little fruit.

O God, who is the great Creator, we pray that we will, one day, more fully understand and celebrate the rich diversity which surrounds us – the wonder of each other and all the earth.

We join your love for your world as we bring our prayers for your people.

We pray today on behalf of those who may not find the words to speak to you, the ones who are so alone in life that they cannot imagine anyone caring for them, or whose illness or disability stands between them and others. Hold them close to your heart, O God, then place them near to us, we pray, and open our hearts to receive them with love.

We pray for those who have been wounded by life in wars or accidents, and in the traumas and disasters which visits us through oceans, winds, floods and fire.

Then visit the shadowy places within us, O God. Find the hidden pain and fear, the tragedy and the guilt which we dare not look at or share with others. Stay beside the things we push away and free us from their power.

We long for the love and acceptance which we see in you, Jesus Christ.

Do not leave us or forsake us, we pray. Amen.

Hymn: 224 (TiS) 'All hail the power of Jesus' name'.

Blessing:

778 (TiS) 'Shalom to you now, shalom my friend'.

