

NORTH MAIN SERMON NOVEMBER 9, 2025

Ephesians 1:15-22

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit^[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Luke 20:42-47

⁴² David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand⁴³ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.””⁴⁴ David calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?”⁴⁵ While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁶ “Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. ⁴⁷ They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

Luke 21:1-4 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³ “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in

more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.

THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

What good is nostalgia? Not so fast. Think about it for a moment. We can be quick to toss aside what came before. Surely there is value in looking back. There is some comfort in remembering what used to be. True, we can get caught up in it, living in the past and losing track of the present, let alone the future. We can look back and think about what used to be. Churches full of people, lots of people offering their time. During the pandemic, many churches and communities of faith lost their way because they were unable to gather in person. Some of these communities have never fully recovered from that time and are shells of their former glory. Others saw the opportunity to be reminded that the church is not the building but the people at work in various ways in the community, and that God was present with them in that work. That is the past and today we need to look forward to where we actually are. We are truly living in a new time and we will most likely not go back to the past but.. As we move toward Giving Sunday, What if you were to think of yourself and your part in this Gospel story as the gift itself? Where can you invest yourself? How can you contribute to God's purpose and mission? We may not think those coins amount to much. Sometimes our faith doesn't amount to much, either. But if it's all we have to live on, how can we make sure we don't squander that gift? The main point that Jesus stresses in the Gospel reading is that God sees the heart behind our gifts, true generosity is measured by sacrifice, and small sacrifices are significant when given with a willing heart. Jesus noted the widow's sacrifice because he saw her heart and motivation, not just the monetary value of her two small coins. This passage gives hope that even small acts of generosity or service done for God's glory have great value in His eyes, even if they go unnoticed by others.

Think of the missions that we have at North Main and which ones are you part of? Which ones would like to part of? We typically think of the big ones that come to mind easily..Food Pantry, Free Lunch, Bible Studies,

Women in Christian Service, Facebook live service, Gift bags to Domestic Violence and the Haven of Hope, Pastoral Care Team, Prayer Chain, Prayer shawls, Pocket shawls, Lay Servant Time at the Wells House and doing the service so that I get a day off, Second Sunday Offering, Heiffer donations, The Captain, the Glove City Coalition and the Neighborhood Engagement Team, Interfaith Counsel, recently the Interfaith Tea, The Albany District Lay Servant Team that helps me keep our Lay Servants active and educated and up to date on new classes, Our Safe Sanctuary Team, Fund Raising Team, Our choir who are here every Sunday with Nancy leading them, Our Trustees and all the wonderful things they have accomplished this year, The Staff Parish team who have had a very difficult year, the Coffee Hour Team which gives everyone an opportunity to get to know each other after church, the people who count the offerings every Sunday after Church, the ones who dedicate flowers each week so our alter looks beautiful. I am not sure if I missed something but I name them so that you can think about all the things we do here and the number of people who do them and just maybe add them to your list of things you may want to get involved in. It does not have to be big, it just has to be your personal contribution. Then we can add the Staff, and all they do. Our new office Assistant Georgia is really taking to her position.. stop in and say good job to her when she is here..our Custodian who makes himself available many times when I need physical help and keeps our church looking clean and nice. Mavis..who shows up every Sunday to work with the choir and play for us...My personal Assistant Werner who does more things here than I can state including videoing the 9:15 service, making sure the heat is on, the Sanctuary is attended to every Sunday, microphones work..doors are unlocked, elevator works..These are some of the things that our staff does to keep North Main working and operational every day. All of theses things are things I would like you to prayerfully consider before we actually fill our Giving cards next week. In today's passage Jesus is continuing his preaching ministry in the temple, and after a long and trying day Jesus wants his disciples to observe something. He is going to compare scribes who are looked at by society as being examples and persons to be looked up to

(well-dressed, positions of power, respected when they enter into an area), against a widow (poor, low position in society, and for the most part invisible). **But Jesus saw her.** This is a story about being seen. Jesus is saying, “I know typically you pay attention and watch these guys, but today, I want you to see this person - watch her.” **Jesus says..***Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers.* The scribes Jesus mentions are men who “like” actually . They coveted these marks of distinction. “One could always recognize a scribe because he wore a white linen robe with a long fringe that reached to his feet.”^[3] The robes also marked them as people who did not do physical labor. This was the distinctive dress of the Jewish scholar. These men made their living with their minds, and they wanted everyone to know it. People were to call them Rabbi, invite them to their social parties, giving them the place of honor at the left or right of the host. Jesus even specifically warned us a few weeks ago about assuming the seat of honor, and how we should not do that in Luke 14:10-11 “*But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’*” As part of the scribes responsibility to oversee the affairs of widow’s estates, they would collect an exaggerated administrative fee. For the most powerful to devour the most vulnerable was heinous to Jesus. Such behavior represents the hypocrisy of the religious elite who were **concerned only with external appearance** and sought to look good in the eyes of others.” Jesus wanted the disciples to look at the giving of the scribes. *Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. 4 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”* How did Jesus know she was a widow? Just like the scribes wore their white robes, widows also wore distinctive mourning clothes. Hers were probably worn and tattered. The contribution from abundance means that **it will not be missed.** But, only

the widow gave in sacrificially. For the scribes and the rich it was **their wealth that got in the way of their giving.**^[17] They had everything to lose, the widow had nothing to lose, so she gave it all. Her loss, was used by God to bring honor to her. **God doesn't count the coins, He weighs the heart.** Just like Jesus saw the widow, God sees us, in our entirety and loves us anyway.

Let us Pray....O Lord, we gratefully acknowledge the gifts you have given to each of us for service in your world. Gifts of teaching, healing, inspiring, challenging and creating are all among the myriad of things you have placed in our lives. Change and challenge are always difficult. We are more inclined to turn our backs on opportunities of service than pitch in to affect the needed changes that will promote healing and wholeness. Jesus has opened the doors for service to each one of us. Be assured that God's love is poured out for you and rejoice. Give us courage to be willing disciples. Help us to be people of promise and hope. Even when we feel lost, God is with us. In Jesus' Name, we offer this prayer. AMEN.