

SUNDAY, November 10, 2024 A Little Bit Means a Lot

Psalms 121 Hebrews 9:24-28 and Mark 12:38-44

Remembrance Sunday is often observed as the Sunday before November 11 and services are held in "remembrance for the men and women who have served, and continue to serve Canada during times of war, conflict and peace"; particularly the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, and all conflicts since then in which members of the Canadian Armed Forces have participated in. It is a statutory holiday for federally regulated employees and a provincial and territorial statutory holiday in six of the 10 provinces and all three territories. Nova Scotia recognizes the day under separate legislation. Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec are the only three provinces where the day is not a statutory holiday. This is partly due to The Royal Canadian Legion being against making the day a national statutory holiday, in part because its leadership believes the time free from work or school would eventually overtake the memorial purpose of the occasion. By having schools in regular session on that day, it gives opportunity for children to be taught the day's true significance in a mandatory fashion.

Remembrance Day is often highlighted by the powerful symbol of the Poppy which is worn over the hearts of individuals from the last Friday in October to Remembrance Day as a visual pledge to never forget those who served and sacrificed their lives so that we might live. Since 1921, the Poppy has stood as a national symbol of Remembrance and is recognized as the symbol for the Royal Canadian Legion's Poppy Campaign, which raises funds to support Veterans and their dependents each year.

As an Associate Member of the RCL, I serve as Branch Chaplain to RCL BR 594 and it is the poppy pinning that first interested me in the work of the Legion. Volunteers do not sell poppies, they pin poppies so that you will remember; any money donated goes to help veterans and their families which is closely monitored by local, regional and national bodies. The poppy light on the communion table is a part of the Legion's various ways of promoting the Poppy campaign and it was purchased to enhance our worship experience today. The little red poppy we wear today is because of the words sung by the choir today- "In Flanders' Fields" where poppies blow. Something little yet powerful enough to cause a country to stop at the 11th hour, of the 11th month each year to remember those men and women who gave of themselves for our sakes.

What they gave was their all- whole being- life itself. And those who continue to serve in the CAF continue to do so for the sake of our nation. And we need to offer our thanks because

Canada is regarded a safe and welcoming home for people from around the world seeking refuge and new beginnings. They gave their all for our sake.

Our story in Mark 12 occurs in the gathering space of the temple. Jesus is making observations about what he sees and teaches. He states, *'Beware of the scribes, because they like to walk around in long robes be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets. They devour widows' houses and say long prayers (for appearances), they will receive their condemnation.'*

By this statement we see that Jesus doesn't much care for these scribes because of their pretense of authority- with long robes and prayers; insistence on being first and placed in honourable positions. They seemed to have lost their true connection to God. But Jesus continues-stating that they devour widows' houses. We must remember that when a husband died, the woman would have been left without anything except for the gifts offered by her extended family. She was not able to own property and so they would lose their houses to others and be at the mercy of others for support of herself and children. It would often be in her best interest to remarry soon again.

Then Jesus sits down opposite the treasury. Much like watching the offering plate, Jesus is observing what occurs. He sees many rich people put in large sums of money. He knows they are rich by their robes and their self-presentation. But then Jesus notices a widow- we do not know if she had children, but what she does is keenly seen by Jesus. She places two small copper coins in the treasury worth very little (a penny). Here in Canada, we don't even have pennies anymore because it cost more to produce them than they are worth. So for this woman to put in these coins, it meant a lot to her but to the overall picture of what was received, this gift was only a little. What is worthy and valuable often gets confused but not by God.

For many people, worth typically has a connection to a monetary measurement or cost of a thing. When we sell or buy items we make an exchange price on something derived based on consensus of a group of people using marketplace guidelines. Additionally, worth largely has to do with the function, capacity or usefulness of a thing in day to day living.

Value on the other hand is something unique from person to person. Value is something that is about a connection or relationship. As humans there are a wide variety of things that we maintain as having value. Often value has nothing to do with the cost of what another person would pay for it. Therefore, value is in what the item intangibly provides to an individual.

What Jesus observes of the woman at the treasury box is not in how much she gives, but in its value to her. "This poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. All of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in everything she had; all she had to live."

When we think about what is important to God we need to understand that worth is based on the outside and value is based on what is on the inside. Worth is transactional. Value is relational. Worth is determined by humans, value is determined by God.

As part of our worship experiences we place our offering in a plate at the back of the church and during the service we bring it forward, stand as able and present the gifts we offer to God in thanksgiving, and with the hope that God will bless what we share and all who offer their gifts so that others may hear the Good News of Jesus. We are not aware of who gives what but as a collective we share together the ministry. Some people give regularly a certain amount and some once or twice a year but what is important is that out of what people been blessed with, people give as able. Because they value the ministry of Jesus Christ and know that Jesus makes a difference in people's lives.

There is a story about a little girl named Hattie and how 57c helped build a church. One Sunday the minister of the church went outside the church and found a group of children unable to get into the small little church because it was too crowded. However, the pastor picked up the little girl and took her into the class where there was a seat for her. It was crowded but she listened carefully. She hoped that someday the church could be bigger for everyone.

Two years later the little girl Hattie died unexpectedly. Before the funeral with the pastor's grief clearly observed the mother handed him a small purse with 57 cents in it. She told him that the little girl had saved her pennies to help the church build a new Sunday School building. He shared this gift with those present who were grieving and to the church services which soon followed. The people were inspired by Hattie's gift and the value she put on the experience of learning about Jesus, that they gave faithfully and soon built a larger building for children of all ages to come and learn about Jesus and worship him.

We value many things in our world today, some things more than others including life itself. As we remember those who gave their lives as a sacrifice for others during times of war and conflict, we need to recognize the value of their gift to future generations. We also need to recognize the gifts that people offer in sharing the message of hope at this time. For we each want to be living in a world filled with hope. Yet the reality is that there has not been a time of

peace. So what must we do? Express what we value to others. What we think is worthy of our time, effort and experience, must be put into action and how we do this is what God calls us to see at this moment- a little bit means a lot. The little things like pennies do add up. There is a saying, "just save your pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves" which means that if we pay attention to small expenses, one may know and understand better management of larger financial matters.

The widow put what she had into treasury in the temple. Her faith was put into action because there was a belief within her that valued what was taught and shared in the gathering place. Jesus had concerns about what was occurring there and taught a new way of living love, but he saw in this woman hope that went beyond her circumstances and that she put her faith in God.

There is something about hope that we need to grasp onto again. We also need to put it into action as we seek God in our lives and live with love. As we share in this Remembrance Sunday, let us be mindful of what we value in our lives and that God values us as well. We are people whom God has deemed worthy because He sent Jesus to redeem us and forgive us. But we must respond in faith and with hope. How we respond, even a little bit means a lot. For our desire as children of God is to live in peace and peace begins in our hearts. If we value peace we will live and love others as Jesus taught. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray

God of grace we praise you and thank you for your gift of love and peace. We pray that peace may prevail on earth. And that it will begin in our hearts. Hear our prayers we ask, In Jesus' name. Amen.