**Sermon 11/11/18**

**Gospel Reading Mark 12:38-44**

Years ago, Warren Buffet shocked many people with his donation to the Gates Foundation of

 $31 Billion Dollars. That was 75% of his worth.

The Gates Foundation was praised for the gift of $287 Million to find a cure for AIDS.

However, that was less than 1% of the $32 Billion in the Foundation and the $50 Million

 he was reportedly worth.

Sir Richard Branson pledged $3 Billion of the profits from his train and airline business

 to fight Global Warming.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful, and a lot of fun, to be able to give so much, to such important projects?

These are all very worthy gifts.

However, they are far from sacrificial.

Giving out of our thankfulness for all we have brings us great joy.

Yet even when it appears we have very little, or nothing at all, we discover we can give something.

Even very, very small gifts are important.

They can make a big difference in the life of the one who gives, as well as the lives of those who receive.

We often fail to realize the great value of the gifts God has given us.

We don’t always recognize the difference our small gifts can make in the lives of others,

when we give them to do God’s work.

The widow’s mite, and the gift of the poor widow to Elijah are examples of how God values

 even the smallest of our gifts.

Often we think we have nothing to give, or nothing of value or importance.

Yet when we trust God, and give what we have to him, we discover he still does miracles,

 in our lives, and in the lives of others.

Elijah was hungry and thirsty. When he asked the widow for a drink of water, she didn’t hesitate

to give it. She had plenty of water.

But when he asked for a bit of bread, she hesitated.

She had only enough to give herself and her son one small last meal.

Elijah told her, “Do not be afraid.”

Fear can often keep us from giving. Fear that our gift isn’t big enough.

Fear of ridicule. Fear that we will not have enough for ourselves.

Fear that our gift will be ignored, or it won’t be large enough to do any good.

Yet, when we trust God, and give to others, we discover our smallest gift is important,

and can help others. We discover we do have enough.

God is able to do amazing things with our tiny gifts.

A man was asked to visit a prospective member of the congregation.

But he was hesitating in going.

It had been a rough week at work, with a lot of overtime, and then demands from the family.

He felt he was too tired to visit.

And besides he wouldn’t be a comfort to anyone as lousy as he felt.

But he went anyway.

He drove up to the house and waited in the car for a few minutes as he prayed for guidance.

The couple welcomed him in with a warm greeting.

He knew the man was recovering well from his open heart surgery.

And the man’s and woman’s faces were beaming with joy of life.

The wife welcomed him warmly and said to him,

“Come, let me fix you some coffee. You look down, and a little tired, let’s talk.”

They all experienced a wonderful visit.

The man and his wife enjoyed the company and conversation.

The man from the congregation felt relieved and refreshed from the time together.

God answered that man’s prayers,

He gave him the guidance of this couple who knew the journey of faith was sometimes difficult,

But they were able to reach out a comforting hand to him.

How we give is just as important as what we give.

Jesus sat down and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury.

He saw many who were rich give large sums of money.

Then he saw a poor widow put in two copper coins which were worth a penny.

Jesus was not condemning the giving of large gifts.

He was simply making an observation that comparatively, the widow’s gift reflected a level of

 devotion greater than that of the largest giver.

Her gift was smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest.

Have you ever wondered” Why would a person with little means,

 why would a person without a great deal of money,

 why would a person without much stuff give to God?

Because of our trust in God is revealed by our actions.

Because we love God, and we are willing to give from our hearts.

The widow gave because she wanted to give.

She was not compelled by guilt, or fear, or reward.

She gave because she was in love, in love with God.

She gave because she felt a deep commitment to God.

She gave because this way she could respond to God’s blessings in her life.

Wealth is not wrong, but it is our attitude towards it which matters most to God.

Josh Wendel and his sisters received a huge inheritance from their parents.

But they lived a very miserly life.

They spent very little of the money and did everything they could to keep their wealth for themselves.

John was able to influence five of his six sisters to never marry,

 and they lived in the same house in New York City for 50 years.

When the last sister died in 1931, her estate was valued at more than $100 million.

Yet, her only dress was one she had made herself, and had worn for 25 years.

The Wendels had such a compulsion to hold on to their possessions, they lived like paupers.

This family hoarded every penny.

They never experienced the joy their great wealth could have provided.

They never knew the joy of spending it, or giving it away.

They sacrificed the fun they could have had.

And so, they died with a fortune in the bank, but no friendship, or laughter, or peace, or joy in their lives.

God invites us to enjoy what we have, however much, or little it may be.

God invites us to experience the joy of giving, sharing, and helping one another.

We have a giving God who loves us with unfailing love.

His love fills us with a love worth sharing with others.

Experience the joy of giving.

Giving is not really a financial decision.

 Giving is a spiritual decision.

AMEN