

Our reading from the Gospel according to Mark for this Sunday speaks of those who parade their reverence, who wear long robes and expect places of honor in the synagogues, who pray long prayers and yet prey upon widows. **BREATHE**

Jesus compares these Scribes, leaders of religion, with the widow who gave her mite two coins worth s of a penny.

BREATHE

Even though she gave very little and the Scribes and Pharisees tossed greater sums in the money boxes in the Temple, Jesus says that the religious leaders gave of their abundance and she of her all. **BREATHE**

“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.” **BREATHE**

The Scribes gave what they had left over after they bought their robes and best seats and places of honor at banquets. They gave from their abundance while the widow gave all she had the word in the Greek is BIOS, like our word for biology she gave her very life. **BREATHE**

Why would someone so desperately poor give all her money to the temple? **BREATHE**

What was she going to use to buy food? Why didn't she at least keep one of the coins for herself? **BREATHE**

She was not asked to do that by Jesus. She gives from the urging of her own heart. While Jesus lifts her up in comparison to the others who may have given greater quantitatively but not proportionally, he does not prescribe giving everything one has as an ideal. Rather, it's a statement against those who give so little without any measure of sacrifice. **BREATHE**

We don't like the thought of giving up what we have, of losing power and control, of being dependent on someone else. **BREATHE**

Ironically, this is precisely what gave the widow the advantage in our story today she didn't have much to hold on to. She wasn't weighted down by worldly possessions. Her only real asset was her faith in God, which, when she put her last two cents in the collection plate, made her net worth equivalent to the sum of God's mercy. **BREATHE**

Her "mite" her willingness to offer God everything she had, was her "might" the source of her strength and self-respect, which the world could never take away. **BREATHE**

Reading and studying of the story of the widow's mite reminds me of Mary Jane a member of my church in Forestport NY and a true beautiful friend. **BREATHE**

Mary Jane about 56 or so came from a large family that grew up with an alcoholic father a mom that worked many jobs to make ends meet, later she herself married an abusive alcoholic and became an alcoholic and drug abuser herself, losing her child to her aunt that raised him. **BREATHE**

Mary Jane had nothing in life but a few clothes and a beat up old trailer to live in which by the way was always always doing repairs on. **BREATHE**

Anyways Mary Jane finally got sick of living as an alcoholic, drug abuser so she ended up in NA and AA she fell many times but always, always got back up and her own two feet and finally won the battle. **BREATHE**

It was one of these AA meetings that Mary Jane to my church, we all fell in love with her and she did us as well, she never missed a Sunday, often leaving a little early to go to one of her many jobs. **BREATHE**

Many of the snowbirds that attended my church aided in her battle, they hired her to care for their homes and later to care for their loved ones. **BREATHE**

One day Mary Jane came to me and said I need to apologize, I said for what, she said I cannot put anything into the offering plate, I am barley scrapping by as it is. My answer to her was this sermon because you see My first church I was commissioned too was a small church and I realized there were probably many that felt this way. **BREATHE**

Here is just a part of the sermon:

Good Morning, this is Stewardship Sunday, and I am not up here to preach about how much each of you should be giving. I am going to let you know what is happening too your church, because some of you may not know. **BREATHE**

I was reading the treasures report for an upcoming Session meeting and I could not believe my eyes, and I asked the session and the treasure if this was true, apparently the church had been in the red for about two months, and unless we did something soon we would be shutting the doors. **BREATHE**

So I ask all of you as a congregation what would you all like to do? Shut down or start a hard campaign of fund raising.

BREATHE

Fund raising was chosen, so during the sermon we had a brain storming of different fund raisers we could do. dinners were a favorite for all, therefore I brought this up to the congregation. The church cannot afford to buy the groceries for the dinners, but is everyone would donate what is needed what we charge at the dinner will all be a profit. This was a hit.

BREATHE

Another thing we chose to do was eliminate all paying portions, janitor, secretary, groundskeeper, etc.. I even tried to give up my pay, but the Presbytery had something to say about that, but there was ways around them HA! Everyone and I mean Everyone took turns at cleaning, mowing, shoveling snow, secretarial work and treasurers work. **BREATHE**

In three years time we went from being in the red with only 12 in attendance to being i the black with a growing balance -6000.00 to + 3000.00 Those fund raising dinners were working, we had Election day Chicken and Biscuits, Thanksgiving

Dinner, Spaghetti Dinners We did soup and sandwiches

Saturdays. **BREATHE**

I will admit I did take on a lot of the jobs on myself because I had an older congregation and frankly I could not stand to see them mowing or shoveling snow, mopping that great big fellowship floor, and to be honest a little hard work never hurt anyone. **BREATHE**

Now the real work needed to start, I took it upon myself to open a thrifts shop in our unused Sunday School Rooms, we needed to reach out to the community and let that small community know we are here, we not just some iconic building, I joined the volunteer Fire Department and the Chaplain, I volunteered our Fellowship hall for many many community events and Funeral receptions, We had like an open mic nite for Blue Grass music with dinner provided, no charge but a donation basket was always in presence. I started office hours every Thursday from 9-4pm thrift shop was open then as well and the coffee pot was always on, eventually people started bring me lunch and I would say stay eat with me, which lead to pot luck Thursday lunches and open to the public, this was Fellowship it really is something I am miss so very much. we

started teaching quilt making. I opened the front doors of the church on Sunday mornings and let the music roll out, I welcomed any and all to our church. Our attendance went from 12 every Sunday to 40, we received new members, and you know today they still have an average attendance of 40. I am so very proud of that little church. **BREATHE**

All of this was accomplices by letting them know that it is not always the monetary gifts that are needed for the church, there is always more than one way to give, volunteer your talent of cleaning, treasurer, secretarial, groundskeeping, anything and everything helps. **BREATHE**

Our goal is to give because we have a God who has given us so much. We are blessed to be a blessing. **BREATHE**

Jesus tell us that “those who are given much, of them much is expected,” and again, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” St. Augustine expanded this last verse from Luke to the following, “Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; where your treasure is, there is your heart; where your heart is, there is your happiness.” **BREATHE**

There is joy in giving that comes from knowing that we are doing our part, our fair share and more besides. **BREATHE**

So make to the question Why, Why did the Widow in Mark give all that she had. The only answer is the extravagant nature of love and faith. **BREATHE**

The offering of the widow in Mark, shows all of us what it means to have a genuine trust, faith and a believe that God will provide. **BREATHE**

The offering of the widow in Mark show all of us what it means to have a generous heart, gracious heart and a grateful spirit for God's blessings in her life.

The widow gave everything she had, and walked away with something more than those who had more to give. **BREATHE**

Her "mite" her last two coins, mere pennies was her "might" her devotion to God, the source of her strength and self-respect. **BREATHE**

This is what I hope you'll get out of the sermon today: Whether you have just a little or a whole lot of material wealth, the more you entrust to God, the greater your experience of life in all its abundance. **AMEN**