

Sermon Notes – November 16, 2025
The Holy Gospel of St. Luke 21: 5-19
Peace Lutheran Church
“The Baptized Know How To Live!”

American poet Wendell Berry, a Kentucky farmer and now 91 years old, encourages much about life and living in his poem, *“Practice Resurrection.”* “...Friends, every day do something that won’t compute. Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for nothing. Take all that you have and be poor. Love someone who does not deserve it.” Some verses later, “Go with your love to the fields. Lie easy in the shade.” Berry finishes with, “Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. *Practice resurrection.*”

In the verses just before today's gospel text (see Luke 21:1-4), a widow comes forward to place two small copper coins in the temple offering. Her gift is much more than the rich; these coins are her entirety - her being, her very sustenance, her existence, all laid before God. And in this death that she faces, knowing she has been reduced to nothing – actually, less than nothing as a penniless widow - she is lifted up by the gaze and words of Christ. The widow goes on her way, unaware that by record of her temple offering she will, although forever nameless, be also forever remembered

This telling stands in contrast to the ongoing telling in Luke 21, as the conversation takes up with all eyes on the capital campaign begun by Herod the Great a generation earlier. This fundraising was for the temple. Covered with beautiful stones and pride and still under construction, this edifice was the glory of all Jerusalem, an ancient Sagrada Familia. The disciples, from far-flung rural towns in the north, are shocked by the sight of it. As their jaws sweep the floor, Christ gives them a hard word: This building - this glory of Jerusalem - this very seat of the Holy One, God Most High - will be cast down, reduced to rubble. You will try to find pieces for keepsakes to remind you of its glory, but all you will find will be pebbles and sand. The death of the building will be swift, and it will be complete.

You will feel the birth pangs. You will be persecuted and arrested. You will be put in prison. Your brothers, your sisters, your friends, your family will – they will all abandon you. Some of you will die excruciating deaths for the sake of the Father. There will come a time when the church will face an even more insidious enemy than persecution and death – as at least persecution and death

have a face and a name and a commitment. This insidious enemy will be one that appears when the world no longer sees a need to persecute you -because "Irrelevant" will be the name of the church. Indifference will be its style. The church will have given up its birthright to speak truth to the world, to scream for the Lord God in the face of injustice, to call evil what it is. The church will sell this birthright for nothing but a bowl of soup and a shared seat at the table of privilege and power.

Yet then, even then, when death surrounds you and the church, rejoice! For it is only through death that rebirth can come. Resurrection comes in the morning. Look for it. Weep for it. Pray for it. Long for it. Stretch out your arms wide in lament and in praise for it. Not a hair on your head will perish. Not a drop of your blood will be forsaken. Not a stripe on your back will be forgotten. Practice Resurrection! Amen!