

**BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI**

**THE WORSHIP OF GOD • MAY 19, 2019**

**EASTERTIDE**

**Litany**

Based on Psalm 148

Praise the Lord in height and depth, on the inside and outside!

**Let all creation join in the song; the planets dancing with the stars.**

Let every creature sing back to the Singer of it all!

**For God spoke, and out of nothing came life.**

Let us pray:

**We draw ourselves into the warmth of your fire, the sparks that find their way  
to each of our waiting hearts. Amen.**

**The Scripture**

Mark 12:41-44

*He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. 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."*

***The Message***

***A New Spirit***

**David Holmes**

Good morning, I'm David Holmes, husband to Lysa, father to DJ, Drew, and Callie, a grampy to Miles, Evelyn, Cason and Ryland, father-in-law to Grace, Monica and Daniel; a retired fund raiser and pastor, a motorcycle rider, and a hot air balloon pilot for Joseph's Coat. Just to give you a brief idea. And I went to the first committee meeting of the Stewardship Committee and somehow that sparked in Nick and Terry the idea: "You're full of hot air; let's make the stewardship campaign about **SOARING!**"

So here we are today, Consecration Sunday, the formal end of the Stewardship Campaign, even though there will still be pledges and commitments coming in for some time.

It seems timely to discuss Broadway's Spirit as we are in the midst of transition and planning for our future and ministry of service. Some years ago, Broadway adopted a

phrase, "The Broadway Spirit" to identify this congregation as a special caring, ministering, serving congregation. But from time to time, it is important to ask, "What spirit is it that we have?" And the answer to that question can make all the difference in the world. So, I want to visit with you for a few minutes about spirit at a very basic, simple level: that is, spirit as a reality, a presence that can be felt and experienced at the most basic, every day level of living. I want us to focus on that spirit-feeling atmosphere which results from who we are, how we do things and why we do them. This may all sound very mundane and ordinary, but the spirit in which something is done is terribly important.

The story is told of a minister who was the stereotype of the kindly, saintly, beloved pastor. People like for their pastor to exemplify the virtues, values, and attitudes of the Christian Gospel. They do not always do that too well themselves, so they like to have a pastor who does. This pastor did so remarkably well. He even took his meager annual salary increases without a word of complaint. Oh, they just loved him! He did have one vice, however. At least he thought so and, certainly, his conservative congregation would have agreed with him. He had a fondness for cherry brandy, and he indulged himself. He worked hard at keeping his little vice a secret. He usually got his annual supply while out of state on his summer vacation. If it needed to be replenished a bit, he tried to stop somewhere between his home and the site of the annual church convention and take care of that.

Someone eventually found about it. Well, they always do. Count on it! When the chair of the board of trustees learned about it, he called the other two trustees together and they discussed it. In reality, they were not so concerned as amused. This was so out of character for their pastor. What they decided to do was have some fun with him. They agreed to offer to chip in and buy him a whole case of cherry brandy. However, it would have to be on the condition that he would then thank them publicly from the pulpit and describe the gift. The chairman contacted the pastor and presented him with the proposition. The pastor considered the offer ever so briefly; after all, they were talking about a whole case. And he said that he would indeed accept their very generous offer and he certainly would thank them as they required.

A few days before Christmas, a discretely wrapped box arrived at the pastor's home, addressed to the attention of the pastor. He opened it and there was indeed a whole case of cherry brandy. It was wonderful! It was unlike any he had ever had. He never bought the good stuff. Well, after all, he felt guilty enough without the additional burden of guilt from spending a lot of money for it, what with the needs of the missionary budget and all.

Now it was his turn to make good on his end of the agreement. As he stood in the pulpit the Sunday after Christmas and was expressing the obligatory thank yous to the congregation for all their Christmas cards, thoughtful notes, plates of goodies and

such, he paused, ever so skillfully. Then he said, “Oh yes, I particularly want to thank the board of trustees for their very generous gift of cherries, and especially the spirit in which the fruit was given.

He was right, of course. It makes a difference. It makes all the difference in the world, the spirit in which a gift is given. And, in the context of who we are as participants in the Body of Christ, it makes all the difference in the world that spirit in which we render service, or give care or practice the gospel, or share in stewardship. We can render a lot of service, do a lot of good for people and not do it in a very good spirit.

So, what does this Spirit of giving have to do with **SOARING!**? One of my favorite little books is *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*” by Robert Fulghum. There is a story in it about a man named Larry Walters. He is a truck driver, thirty-three years old. He is sitting in his lawn chair in his backyard, wishing he could fly. For as long as he could remember, he wanted to go up. To be able to just rise right up in the air and see for a long way. The time, money, education, and opportunity to be a pilot were not his. Hang gliding was too far away. So, he spent a lot of summer afternoons sitting in his backyard in his ordinary old aluminum lawn chair -- the same kind with the webbing and rivets like you and I have in our backyards.

The next chapter in this story is carried by the newspapers and television. There’s old Larry Walters up in the air over Los Angeles. Flying at last. Really getting up there. Still sitting in his aluminum lawn chair, but it’s hooked on to forty-five helium filled surplus weather balloons. Larry has a parachute on, a CB radio; a six pack of beer, some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and a BB gun to pop some of the balloons to come down. And instead of being just a couple of hundred feet over his neighborhood, he shot up eleven thousand feet, right through the approach corridor to the Los Angeles International Airport.

When asked by the press why he did it, he said: “You can’t just sit there.” When asked if he was scared, he answered, “Wonderfully so.” When asked if he would do it again, he said, “Nope.” And asked if he was glad that he did it, he grinned from ear to ear and said: “Oh yes.”

Each one of us has choices to make. We can sit in our lawn chair and give the message that there’s nothing left to do. And the Larry Walters of the world are busy tying balloons to their chairs, directed by dreams and imagination to do their thing.

We can sit in our chair and on the one hand is the message that the human situation is hopeless. And the Larry Walters of the world soar upward knowing anything is possible, sending back the message from eleven thousand feet: “I did it, I really did it. I’m Flying!” I’m **SOARING!**

We call today Consecration Day...while it's the formal wrap up of our annual Stewardship Campaign with the theme, *SOARING* we need to be reminded that Stewardship is a year-round opportunity. Giving, stewardship, fund raising, Philanthropy...there are many terms that describe it. And it's a sensitive subject for many of us. It's a subject I discussed with individuals, families, organizations, and groups for 25 years as a fund raiser for the NBA of the Christian Church, a university, and a hospital.

The Scripture read: "And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, 'Truly, I say to you this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living.'"

This scripture is preceded by a series of confrontations between Jesus and Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and other holy men. Finally, Jesus breaks away and takes a seat across from the place where people came to give their offerings. As he sat there among the alms boxes and watched people making their contributions, out of them all, one widow stirred him and moved him to exclaim: "Here is the real thing!"

Use your imagination a little...there are lots of people, all dressed in their Sunday best, knowingly or unknowingly showing off their fine clothes and wealth, just a little. In fact, they've taken their money and traded the larger denominations of money for smaller ones so they would have more coins and make more noise when placing them in the treasury. The more noise made, the more money given. at least that's what they hoped others would think.

Then suddenly, here's a poor widow. Lives on fixed income. Barely making it. Dressed very conservatively; perhaps shuffling along, never really picking up her feet. And upon reaching one of the thirteen offering plates, drops in two small coins. All she had. And out of all the noise, Jesus' ears were attuned to the faintest noise of all, the falling of two small coins, the smallest in circulation, worth about two cents in purchasing power. Yet, in the sight of God, who looks on the heart, the Spirit in which the gift was made, that was big business. It has proved to be one of the world's mightiest financial transactions.

Let me tell you something about Spirit...A *SOARING* Spirit. As a fund raiser for 25 years it was my privilege to work with many generous volunteers and financial supporters...folks just like you who make pledges, who leave estate gifts that make a difference for years to come, and who make outright contributions.

And during that time, I have been emotionally surprised and moved by thoughtful modest gifts and very generous gifts. I was especially overcome with emotion one day when I opened an envelope, and there, taped to two three by five cards was \$3.85 in change. I was serving as director of development at Colorado Christian Home (now Tennyson Center for Children), a Christian Church (DOC) facility in Denver. The writing in the available space left on the card was so shaky, it was almost illegible. But, with some help, we were finally able to read the note: "It's not much, but I hope it will help bring a smile to a small child's face." From little, this faithful lady has given much.

The distinguishing mark of the widow's gift and the gift of my faithful lady friend was not merely its proportion to their means; there was something in their heart that lifted the gift out of routine into the realm of sacrifice. The support of the church, its ministries and other programs throughout the world has come more from the two coppers of the poor than from the large checks of the rich. They have contributed not only their money, but also the spirit of a loving, caring, generous heart that needs to help others. Not equal gifts...but equal sacrifice.

Giving, stewardship, fund raising, philanthropy...there are many terms that describe the act performed by the widow and my donor friend. But every time the topic is discussed, one realizes how sensitive a subject it is for many. But, the long and short of it is, that as part of the Body of Christ, we have a ministry to perform for ourselves, for our community and for others around the globe. We should feel good recognizing we are part of His Body. An identifiable, feelable presence, a positive spirit should be in this place and within each of us.

My personal stewardship began as a small child in First Christian Church, Big Spring, Texas. A church founded in 1881, the first church organized in Big Spring. We were just an average family....my dad sold Oldsmobiles and GMC trucks and helped manage an auto dealership for 38 years, up to his death. My Mom was a homemaker and a volunteer with well over 2000 volunteer hours. Great role models for me. After my father's death, Mom eventually needed to move into an assisted living facility and then eventually here to Columbia. And as I began to make ready the home my parents had lived in (and my brother and I grew up in) for over 50 years, I found bundles of cancelled checks. That's back when we used to get the cancelled checks back. And among the cancelled checks for the phone and utilities, the groceries and an occasional meal out, a cemetery plot purchased for one of Dad's brothers who didn't have much, a new pair of Sunday shoes so my others could become school shoes, were cancelled checks to First Christian Church given about every two weeks (and some extra in between for special needs). Those cancelled checks told a lot about our family; our hopes and dreams, our values. Dad and Mom were regular pledgers and givers at church. Pledges allow the church to plan its ministry for the year by having a better idea the level of commitment from members and friends. Back then, we had youth group on Sunday evenings before the evening worship service where my Dad

lead the singing out of little brown hymnals. And I remember those little cardboard churches that were given flat and you put together as a bank to collect your pennies, nickels and dimes for the Easter offering or for that general offering that supported the ministries of the general church.

Those memories and practices have carried over into Lysa's and my life today. We make a pledge and are monthly givers...some of you may give every week or other times. But when the offering plate is passed and we've already made our monthly gift, Lysa places her hand over the plate as a personal offering, as do some of you. It's the Spirit in which the gift is made. And, if you have not developed a practice of stewardship in support of Broadway Christian Church, its mission and ministries in the name of Christ, I hope you will seriously consider joining Lysa, me, and the many others who enjoy participating in the Broadway Spirit through the giving of time, talent and money.

Let me close with one last story from, once again, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

Giants, wizards, and dwarfs was the game to play. It involves some intellectual decision making. But the real purpose of the game is to make a lot of noise and run around chasing people until nobody knows which side you are on or who won.

Organizing a room full of wired up grade schoolers into three teams, explaining the rudiments of the game, achieving consensus on group identity...all this is no small accomplishment, but it's done.

The excitement of the chase had reached a critical mass. The leader yelled out: You must decide now which you are...a Giant, a Wizard, or a Dwarf.

While the troops huddled in frenzied, whispered consultation, a tug came at the leader's pants leg. A small child stands there looking up and asks, in a small, concerned voice, "Where do the Mermaids stand?"

"Where do the Mermaids stand? Where do the Mermaids stand? Wait a minute; there are no mermaids in this game; there are no mermaids," the leader says.

"Oh, yes, I am one!"

What was the leader's answer at the moment? Every once in a while, you say the right thing. "The mermaid stands right here by the King of the Sea!"

So, the leader and the child stood there, hand in hand, reviewing the troops of Wizards, Giants and Dwarfs as they rolled by in wild disarray.

She did not relate to being a Giant, a Wizard, or a Dwarf. She knew her category. Mermaid. And she was not about to leave the game to go over and stand against the wall where a loser would stand. She intended to participate, wherever mermaids fit into the scheme of things. Without giving up dignity or identity. She took it for granted that there was a place for Mermaids and that the leader would know just where.

Well, where DO the Mermaids stand? All the Mermaids, the Larry Walters, my little old lady donor, the widow Jesus watched...all those who are different, who do not fit the norm and who do not accept the available boxes and pigeonholes?

Answer that question and you can build a school, a nation, or a world on it...you can build a church, minister to shut-ins, help a neighborhood, support a family who has lost a loved one, build a home through Habitat and much more. You can provide Christian youth programs, help men and women with special needs, or older adults who have diminished their resources, or you can help abused children.

And by the way, it is not true that Mermaids do not exist. I know many personally. I have held their hand. And there are Mermaids among you

My special friend who gave the very thoughtful \$3.85 gift and the poor widow who gave her last two coins were Mermaids in their time. They knew there was a place for their offerings. And there is a special place for your offerings too. Think carefully; don't let the opportunity for you to give pass you by.

Come *SOARING* with Lysa and me and the many others who have joined in the Broadway Spirit Where Dreams Take Flight. And yes, Mermaids do exist. We have all held their hands.

Amen.