



**A Sermon for 25th Sunday after Pentecost
November 10, 2024**



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[Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Good morning. As most of you know, I am a veteran. I served in the Navy from April of 1992 to April of 1996. For most of that time I was an electrician aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F Kennedy. I served on a six-month Mediterranean cruise during the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia. We spent two years in the shipyard completing an overhaul, and my last several months were involved with re-qualifying the carrier for active service.

This weekend we celebrate veteran's day, but this is not veteran's day message, or not entirely.

This week we went through a major election, but this is not a political sermon. Mostly.

This is not the sermon I was planning on writing a few weeks ago. I gave you the details of my service at the beginning because that's as much as I plan to talk about my time in the armed forces.

One of the things we celebrate for veteran's day is service. One phrase attributed to veteran's remembrances is "all gave some; some gave all. ", which goes back to the Korean conflict. This phrase calls to mind the widow from Jesus' observations in the reading from mark this morning. She gave what little she had. Just about a quarter of an hour's share of the average daily wage. Barely enough for a modest meal. And yet, she gave, without hesitation.

Veterans serve for many reasons. Family history of service, college money and experience, a sense of nationalistic pride, and a genuine need to be a part of a bigger body of service. Whatever the reason, they stand up, raise their hand, take the oath, and spend months training, years away from home, and face dangers all over the world.

One veteran or active service person can do amazing things. But when you put together platoon of Marines, a company of Army soldiers, a fleet of Navy sailors, a squadron of Air Force service members, and all those who guard our coasts; You see them do astounding things. Things that sometimes defy imagination.

Think of the National Guard jumping to support the recovery efforts of the recent hurricanes. Think of the police, EMT's, and firefighters who jumped into danger on September 11th. People charge in to do extraordinary things, not just because they see a need, but because they know somewhere next to them, behind them, someone else has their back.

Another group of people that stand up to serve are those that take a few days a few times a year to work for the many local boards of elections around the state and throughout the country. They monitor, assist, and maintain the voting process, along with elected officials, to help run what should be fair, free, and safe elections. A few in this congregation, including myself, have done this for a few years. It is a rewarding, albeit exhausting, experience.

A poll worker welcomes the voter, verifies their eligibility and checks them in, sets up the electronic ballot, and answers any question or problem with the process. It is not our business which way any one person is voting, and any ballot question is addressed by a teamed pair of both parties or an independent, so there is no bias. This is a straightforward task, but when it is multiplied by several hundred to 2000 plus individual voters per location, the day becomes long and hectic. At the end of the day, votes are counted, compared to the check-in numbers for validation, and all the results and duplicate reports are driven back to the Board of Elections.

It takes so many people to make democracy work. Working together, working in opposition, checking and balancing so many different viewpoints. Compromising when possible, leading a vocal minority opinion to temper a majority effort, and keeping the country moving in concert with its founding guidelines towards greater justice while the pendulum swings from right to left and back again through the decades.

But how do we work together and try to keep an even keel?

Both the Psalm and our passage from Hebrews has a guide.

In summary, the Psalm states, if God is not involved in your building, your watching, or your working, then all your efforts are in vain. The Hebrews

passage contrasts the man-made temple with the holy sanctuary of heaven itself, which Christ has entered in, putting away sin by sacrificing himself once for all.

What must we do? On our own we can do nothing. But, together, as a community of believers, with the example of Jesus the Christ, with the in-dwelling of the Holy spirit, we can do amazing, miraculous things.

How do we? And what's the difference?

How do you build a house? It takes many things. Block and poured concrete for foundation. Wood and nails for framing and walls. Drywall to define and separate rooms. Painting to finish and decorate, cabinets, carpet, and lights.

What does it take to build a Home? You need people to fill it with love. A family which cares for the place and for each other. Gatherings with food and fun. Years and generations of living and growing to make an empty place into a warm embrace when you open the door.

How then do you build 'A' church? It also takes many things. Brick and stone for a sturdy edifice. Windows, both double insulated and decoratively stained. To see the world outside and to tell the story of faith. Pews or chairs, as you like, as a place to sit and listen, or stand as the liturgy demands. It also occasionally takes a new HVAC system to make things comfortable and efficient.

On the other hand, it takes different things to build THE church. To build 'THE' Church, you need a collection of spiritual people involved in prayer and study. People who are welcoming. Members of a community, each with various gifts to contribute. Not all are one, not all are the other, but each has their own.

A church is a human place built for god's work by human hands

THE church is a holy place built by Christ's sacrifice so that we can enter into god's presence. Amen