

2 DEVOTION

Being Church Together
Pastor Ron Glusenkamp
ELCA Capital Campaign

ON THE ROAD TOGETHER

Traveling into the next 500 years

“EACH OF YOU MUST GIVE AS YOU HAVE MADE UP YOUR MIND, NOT RELUCTANTLY OR UNDER COMPULSION, FOR GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

I was a guest preacher at a congregation. The service was about to begin. I was sitting in the pew chatting with a young man who had recently started attending “the Lutheran church.” His fiancée was Lutheran and he wanted to join her on the same path. On this particular Sunday she was working so he was in church without her. I commended him for coming. The acolyte went to the front of the church and picked up the processional cross. By all appearances he looked like a substitute acolyte. He started to go to the back of the sanctuary when the pastor stopped him and reminded him that he hadn’t yet lit the candles.

So, he dragged the cross back to the front. Then he went and got his candle-lighter and proceeded to light the candles. Then he took the cross to the rear of the sanctuary. My new friend leaned over to me and said, “I haven’t been going to Lutheran services for too long, but I know you can’t start until you light the candles.”

We both chuckled. Yes, there is a process for how things often are done. Yes, it’s important to let the light shine.

The same is true for gift giving. St. Paul in his “text” message to the Corinthians reminds them and us that it is primary to “make up your mind” when deciding how or when to make a gift.

Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury in his book, *Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace* asks a couple of key questions, “What opportunities are there in your own budget to put more emphasis on giving? In what way might God be calling you to be generous this Lent?”

WOW! Talk about a conversation stopper. Immediately, many of us might feel that we are giving as much as we can. However, those two questions ask us to stop what we’ve been doing and to reflect on where our heart and mind is with the process.

Just imagine if you and I were able to give a little more over the six weeks of Lent. My guess is that after Lent (like on Easter Sunday) you and I would come to the conclusion that we could keep giving at that particular level and maybe even increase it a little bit more. And what if there were 2-3 other people in our circle of friends or congregation and community who would do the same?

“O God, in your love you have given the people of this land gifts of abundance beyond what our forebears knew or could imagine. Mercifully grant that we may not be so occupied with material things that we forget spiritual gifts, and thus, even though we have gained the whole world, lose our souls; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen” (ELW page 80)

