



**FROM: THE DESK OF PASTOR CARUANA**  
**TO: The People of Zion Lutheran Church**  
**DATE: March 27, 2020**

## **GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER**

The basis for cheerful giving is the grace of God: *"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gifts"* -- the gift of a Savior, the gift of life, the gift of eternal life, the gift of God's love, and the gift of all God's blessings.

We give to meet the needs of God's people but also to overflow in our thanks to God. We thank God for revealing his love to Zion through faithful church leaders and church members, through family and friends, and through ministry groups within Zion that have enabled us to grow in grace and the knowledge of God.

What's true for me is also true for all of us who have been favored with the blessing of faith in Christ and the enjoyment of his grace in a congregation where we are spiritually fed and nurtured. Those who are aware of their blessings and are thankful to God for them, will give to the needs of others and the furtherance of the ministries of the Gospel, not reluctantly or under compulsion, but cheerfully.

I am thankful of those who are giving cheerfully to Zion. God loves you if you are giving cheerfully and thankfully in support of our budget ... primarily in the areas of personnel expenses; maintenance, utilities, and insurance; outreach; fellowship; education; and the church at large.

Cheerful giving is planned giving. It's what we have decided in our hearts to give. We have prayed about it and sought to give generously as God has blessed us. We don't give thoughtlessly, or only from what we have left after our other priorities. Some can give more than others because of their circumstances. Jesus commented on the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. "He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote about a merchant who had prospered in business and built a house in the country which he had enlarged and laid out the grounds at great expense. When he went to his office, he was called upon by a representative of a society, and he replied to representative's requests, "I really cannot afford to give anything." He was a man who had usually been very generous, and it touched his conscience a little afterwards to think that he should begin to withhold what he gave to his Lord. At night, he sat by the fireside meditating, and he said to himself, "I really do not know whether I was wise to build this house; it has brought a deal of expense: new furniture is needed, expenses have increased, the girls need more for clothes -- everything is on a more lavish scale, and yet I have been stinting the Lord. I fear I have done amiss; I do not feel easy about it at all."

As he was thinking he fell asleep. He saw the door open and there came into the room a very meek and lowly stranger. He advanced to him and said, "Sir, I have called upon you to ask for your help for a missionary society which sends the Gospel to those who do not know it. You are wealthy, will you give me help to send them the Word of Life?" He said, "You must excuse me; really, my expenses are so great that I must curtail. I am quite unable to give you anything; I must decline." The stranger looked at him with a mournful glance, and said, "Perhaps you think that the work is too far away, and you do not give because the money is to be sent overseas. I will tell you then that there is a school for indigent children near your

place of business, and it is about to be shut up for lack of funds; and there are poor little children ignorant of the love of God -- will you give for that?" The merchant was a little vexed to be asked again, and he said, "Stop troubling me; I cannot afford it; I cannot give you anything."

The stranger brushed a tear from his eyes, and he said, "Well then, I must ask you at least for something for the Bible Society. That, you see, lies at the root of everything; it gives away the Word of God, and surely, if you cannot afford to give to the Missionary Society, or to the School, you will give for the Word of God itself." "No," he said, "I have told you that I cannot do it," and then -- and then the Stranger seemed to change, and though He was still meek and lowly, His countenance became majestic! There was a Glory in his face, and yet there were lines of grief, and he said, softly and very sternly, "Five years ago that little daughter of yours, with the fair hair, lay sick of the fever, and you prayed in the bitterness of your soul that the darling of your heart might not be taken from you, but that you might be spared that heavy stroke. Who heard that prayer, and gave you back your child?" The merchant covered his face with his hands and felt ashamed. "Ten years ago," said the same Voice, "you were in great difficulties. Checks were returned because of insufficient funds; you were on the verge of bankruptcy; your hair seemed as though it would turn gray with worry. To whom did you apply in the day of trouble, and who heard you, and who found you friends who helped you over your difficulties? Who did that for you?" "Once more," said the Stranger, "fifteen years ago you felt the burden of your sins. You went up and down the world wringing your hands with fear, and crying, "God have mercy upon me!" Your heart was overwhelmed. Who in that hour, spoke the forgiving words which canceled all your sins? Who took all your iniquities upon Himself?" The merchant sobbed aloud, and trembled much when the Voice said, "If you will never ask anything of me again, I will never ask anything of you." The man fell on his face before the Visitor, and said, "Take All!"

Whether it was a dream or not, it's certain that that merchant gave to the cause of Christ as few had ever done before. "God loves a cheerful giver." Give out of a thankful heart. But first, have you given Him your heart? Have you put your trust in Jesus? If not, this message is not for you; but if your heart belongs to God, and has been washed in the blood of the Cross, let this Word sink deep into your ears, and deeper still, into your hearts, for "God loves a cheerful giver!"

During 2020, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic, churches, including Zion, will be struggling due to the lack of giving. Can you see it in your heart to be one of God's cheerful givers – sustaining Zion and, in turn, sustaining others. Please consider supporting Zion on a regular basis. It will be much appreciated.

Remember: **GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER**