



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

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Pastor Daniel Kempin

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Dear coworkers in the kingdom,

In a poem called “The Christmas Coat,” the story is told of a man who had just purchased a very expensive coat for his wife as a Christmas gift. Before he left the store, he was approached by a young boy who wanted help buying a coat for his own mother. The boy, you see, had been working and saving, and now brought all of his money to buy her a gift—a dollar and a dime.

The man was moved by the boy’s love and desire to give, so rather than let him be disappointed to discover that what he had was not nearly enough, he held out the coat that he had just purchased and with a wink to the girl at the counter said, “Son, that’s exactly what this coat costs.” The coat was wrapped up with a big bow, and the young boy left, proud of the beautiful gift he had purchased for his mother.

I won’t spoil how the poem ends. I just want to point out that the powerful part of the story hinges on an economy that doesn’t work. The man set a price on the coat that would make any businessman cringe. Common sense would say he lost money. It was not a sound financial decision. It was a financial decision that could only be balanced in the ledger of love.

It is a concept I recently heard called, “The reverse economy of God.” In the kingdom, the meek inherit the earth. The greatest is the servant. The king is born in poverty and sleeps in a stable. In the kingdom, what is scarlet is made white, we receive beauty for ashes, and poverty results in generosity. That doesn’t exactly make sense, unless you understand the reverse economy of God.

Generosity, you see, does not rest on the security of wealth. We don’t give when we have enough to make it possible. Generosity rests on the security of faith. We give because we know that HE will make us rich enough to do so. We see this showcased in so many biblical stories that teach us about giving. The widow who gave her last mite, the Corinthians who insisted on giving in spite of trial and poverty, the first fruits offering, the widow who gave the first portion of her last meal to the prophet Elijah—these all show us the reverse economy of God. We are rich because of HIM, and we see that wealth not in what we *accumulate*, but in what we *give*.

It is our practice at St. John’s to set aside time every year to reflect and learn of what God says in His word about giving. We call this our “stewardship campaign,” and for the next two Sundays we will address this topic in the sermons. It is important to understand that this is not a fundraising effort, but an opportunity to intentionally learn what God’s Word teaches on this



subject, and while you will have an opportunity to turn in a pledge for congregational ministry support on Loyalty Sunday, the focus is not on what is given, but on how we give it.

Next week you will receive another letter with more food for thought and a pledge card. Until then, please read and reflect on some of the scriptures that reflect the reverse economy of God: **2 Corinthians 9:6-15, John 6:8-11, 2 Kings 4:1-7.**

Your partner in ministry,

-Pastor Kempin

