

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

Giving in a Season of Hoarding - or - “Lunch with Luke” Lives!

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” —Luke 6:38

I suppose that we are all now familiar with the practice of hoarding, when a person begins to save everything they possibly can, often causing their home to actually fill up with all kinds of saved materials. Until a few years ago this practice was little known or discussed, but two television series on hoarding have made most of us aware of this sad situation. (The television shows have done much to raise awareness, but regrettably they have also managed to expose people’s less than presentable behaviors to millions. When I speak of hoarders, I am referring to folks with a serious problem to overcome, and people that deserve our support and respect as ones loved by God.) The television programs may cause us to look down upon hoarders, but as always, we quickly find that the ones we look down upon are often much like ourselves! There’s a bit of the hoarder in each of us I suppose. There’s the Costco bargain buyer who boasts of how much they saved by buying a ten-year supply of shaving cream and toothpaste. While I have never been a Costco member, I can be good at stockpiling. If I find a great closeout sale bargain, I am not above purchasing a several year supply. My motto: “If it don’t rot, why not?” Our Dutch sense of thrift nudges us toward such accumulation in the name of good economy. And besides, we are human, and as fallen men and women we can easily think of ourselves only and accumulate for our own preservation. “If you don’t look out for yourself, who will?” And in this uncertain time of COVID it is especially easy to fall prey to fear and clinging.

How refreshing it has been during this crisis to witness some joyful giving at St. Luke’s as our *Lunch with Luke* supplies continue to vanish from our sight and to find new homes. You may recall a report from early in the shutdown. Our free lunch program had just stocked up on rubber gloves and cleaning wipes, and had also received some generous community donations. As soon as the shutdown came and LWL was forced to pause its ministry these supplies were hastily passed on to other food ministries in the area that were much in need of such items. A large donation was also passed on to a feeding program here in Warwick Township. In a few weeks our frozen supplies, and there were many, were being sold off, or simply given away as they had expiration dates. Most recently we made a connection with the Community Thanksgiving Dinner

and passed on to them some remaining frozen supplies and several dozens of canned goods—the large industrial cans. And with all that went a generous monetary donation. Our kitchen and supply shelves are moving toward empty.

But what about our restart? We are confident that we will ride again, and in light of this it may be tempting to fear and to cling. “It took a long time to build up that inventory, and most of it will survive until we restart.” “Couldn’t we keep those funds for an improvement or new equipment? There is always a carpet in need of replacing and some kitchen machines which could help the ministry.” I suppose that none of us are above such fears and frets, myself included, but as I watch these items disappear, it feels wonderful! It is a joy to watch LWL live on even through this hiatus. What a delight to know that others are being blessed by items which might otherwise simply age. And what a joy to know that when LWL restarts God will gladly restock us to overflowing. We have that promise in God’s Word, Luke 6:38. I suppose that we could fret and lament, but we decided for glad faith instead.

COVID is a season which lends itself to hoarding. We still hear the reports of folks stockpiling paper products, cleaning supplies and other items. Most homes have taken a hit financially this year which naturally causes us to cling. It is also tempting to cheer ourselves by ordering on-line and waiting with anticipation for the box at the door and the item which we may or may not have needed.

This year, let us do all we can to overcome clinging and fretting. Let us give and trust as we are able, and we are usually much more able than we care to confess. In these homebound times many have reorganized their homes and supplies, from the kitchen to the bedroom and garage. Now may be a time to do more than just organize. What might God be calling us to give? That’s how LWL lives on, even during its suspension, and that’s how we keep active in ministry in a time of so many restrictions. Tough times like these can create self-focused hoarders, but our gracious God, the God of providence, wants to create generous, other-minded givers. Let us follow *Lunch with Luke’s* leading.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

*Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous;
Teach me to serve thee as thou deserves;
To give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labor and not to seek reward,
Save that of knowing that I do thy will.*

—St. Ignatius Loyola, 1491-1556