

BETHANY REJOICER  
June 2007

“Do we have to?” “All of it?” That won’t amount to much? Those were the comments being shared within families.

Canning jars, ice tea jars, old mugs... couches, chairs, car ash trays...pockets, change purses, and piggy banks were emptied, and the coins were brought to worship. There wasn’t much warning or preparation – a little word of mouth, a post card in the mail, and an announcement in the bulletin of the day of the event. But the people scraped together what they had and prepared to share their “spare change” with those who a week before had everything when they went to bed and overnight found that they had nothing the next morning. A tornado destroyed nearly everything in a town of nearly 1500. That was just one community of many that were affected by violent weather that night.

A “Noisy” offering. What is a “noisy offering”? A collection/offering of change (coins) so when placed in the collection plate it makes a lot of noise. It’s simple, a little gimmicky, fun, noisy, and quite frankly a gift that was shared freely and most won’t even miss. There are even those who consider change (*coins*) a nuisance and can’t wait to get it out of their pockets.

There were a few things that I observed, or more accurately said, a few things God refreshed my memory on that Sunday. I know these things, you know these things, but it still tickles me to see them at work.

First of all, **God’s people are generous people.** I guess we can’t help ourselves. We have reason to be generous, **because God has been generous with us.** Yes, we are a people of abundance, but it wouldn’t matter if we were people of poverty – we still have a generous God who provides for us abundantly

Secondly, **O’ what fun it is to give.** We are reminded of this in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians.

*“So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion.*

*The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.<sup>7</sup> Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or*

*under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”*

I wish all had my vantage point on that Sunday, as I watched the smiles spread as the noise increased. Or when the little ones had to take a peak into the tub to see just how much change (coins) was really in there. And then to see their faces in awe and joy as they observed how much money was being collected. It is fun to give.

And can you believe it – that “spare change” totaled over \$1,000. I am always amazed, but not really surprised, how **God can do so much with so little.** A few quarters, some dimes and a few pennies (some quiet money too) and over \$1,000 is gathered. It reminds me of a story that can be found in each of the gospels – the story when Jesus takes a few loaves of bread, a few fish and feeds 5,000 plus – and there are leftovers. In this case, people had taken their leftovers, pooled them together, and they have a very generous gift to share with some people who are in need. God is amazing! How God can take little and multiply it is simply amazing.

*(If anyone would like to help the tornado victims in Kansas and Oklahoma, I would suggest sharing your gifts through ELCA Disaster Relief who were working side-by-side with the victims the day-after. Money’s collected through ELCA Disaster Relief go \$1 for \$1 to the place/people who it is intended for.)*

ELCA World Hunger Appeal. Sunday, July 15<sup>th</sup> is “**Go and Do Likewise**” Sunday – this theme is based on the Good Samaritan story from Luke 10:25-37. We will use this Sunday to lift-up ELCA World Hunger Appeal. At the beginning of June (and they will be available throughout the month) we will be distributing small coin boxes for you to begin collecting your hunger offering. I encourage you to set up some type of discipline for the month that will challenge you to give to the hunger needs of the world. Maybe plan to give a quarter a day. Or contribute \$.50 for every pop or cup of coffee you buy. Or \$5 for every time you go out to eat. Set-up something that works for you, that challenges you, that makes you think what it means to be a neighbor to the world around us. And then on Sunday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, we will bring our collection boxes to church and lift-up that theme “**Go and Do Likewise**”.

**Pastor Bill Peters**