Giving Because You Have Been Given!

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Our Lord Jesus Christ supplies His Church with all that it needs to carry out its mission of "feeding the found" and "seeking and saving the lost." St. Paul states that with these words: "*And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus*." (Phil. 4:19). How come it is that some churches seem to limp along with a lack of resources? It seems when there are a lack of dollars that conflict arises, and people begin to play the blame game and everyone else is responsible, and to blame.

Lest we travel too far, no one is exempt. "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*." (Romans 3:23). One can only stop and ask, "how can I improve in my stewardship of giving?" Maybe it is time to take "*the log out of one's own eye, before one goes speck finding in the eye of the brother*." Some people think that their "tithing" is adequate! Is it?

What we do is never adequate! Our giving can only flow from the fact of what we have been given. Paul says in (I Cor. 3:10), "*According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it*." The Greek verb is in the passive and comes from διδωμι. Note some of the meanings which Thayer has: to give one something, to bestow, give as a gift, to grant, to supply, to furnish. Talk about Christ Jesus and the Gospel; it is all there in those meanings.

The Christian can and does give generously because he has been given. He has received forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in Christ Jesus. God does bestow that blessing in Holy Absolution pronounced by the Pastor, either individually or corporately. It is pure gift as evidenced in Christ Jesus, who came in human flesh to go to the cross and shed His life –giving blood, to atone and cleanse us from all sin. God does grant and supply and furnish all that we need in our lives so that His Church can have all that it needs for her mission.

John uses that same verb root in (I John 5:11) when he says: "*And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*" The Pastor needs to be giving His people Jesus in Word and Sacrament and in the Divine Service. Apart from those means what will people be receiving? People need to be taught why they are coming to the Divine Service, namely to receive the gifts of God. It is only after people have received that they, by God's grace and mercy, can begin to give. If you don't give your people what they need, how can you expect them to return generously unto the Lord? Paul adds: "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might rescue us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.*" (Galatians 1:3-5).

