

Putting Christ First in Financial Matters

Dear Friends:

November 15, 2007

With the harvest, Thanksgiving, and our stewardship emphasis at First Lutheran all happening in fairly close proximity, reflecting on faith and economic matters seems like a natural for this month's article. What would it mean to put Christ first in our finances - in our decisions and actions about money?

Perhaps the most obvious "first" here would be *first fruits giving*: the practice of giving our offerings to God as the *first* item on our spending list, rather than the last item ("what I am able to give after taking care of everything else"). This practice goes back to when the people of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land. (Deuteronomy 26:1-11)

Many believers have discovered that practicing this "first" produces some very welcome results in their lives. It seems to go a long way toward putting people's entire "financial house" in order. Their whole economic situation becomes less frantic, less chaotic. Things run more smoothly, and they are a lot calmer about life's financial demands.

This is not to say that first fruits giving is a sure-fire gimmick to becoming wealthy. It's not. Finding such a gimmick is an obsession Christ wouldn't recommend anyway. Rather, this is simply to observe that when our priorities are rightly arranged, it tends to have a positive "ripple effect" into every area of our lives. And many people have borne witness to this, having experienced it.

From there, we could extend this idea into our entire financial lives, not just our offerings (our charitable giving). Whether it be income or outflow, every financial transaction is like every other behavior - indeed, like everything we ever do. All our thoughts, words, and deeds, including our finances, are to be done to the glory of God, putting Christ first. Do any of us accomplish this in all things? Certainly not. We are sinners. But when we do, we're a lot happier. And when we don't, Christ always stands ready to forgive.

Sincerely in Christ, Pastor Carl L.M. Rasmussen