

## Joyful Generosity

**Luke 17:1-7** by Patty Friesen and Ben Buhler (Oct. 13/19)

An article on joyful generosity by Peter W. Marty (Christian Century, July 31, 2019). Agonizing memories of deep embarrassment can't be good for cardiac health. Merely recalling certain panic-stricken experiences can immediately spike blood pressure, elevate the pulse, and flush the face. When, in our first year of marriage, my wife and I passed on to another just-married couple a wedding gift we had received, we were present for the unwrapping. It was a lovely picnic basket, one of two identical ones we had been given. Unbeknownst to us, the "To Peter and Susan Marty" gift tag was left in the bottom of the basket from our wedding.

Re-gifting can be a risky practice with all types of gifts except one - the kind we receive from God. When we share gifts or blessings that have been given to us by God, there is no end to the joy extended. Besides time, money or talent, there are other things of God that can be re-gifted. Bethany and Hannah Goralski are twin 25 year old sisters who each donated a kidney to separate strangers earlier this year. Their dad died of kidney failure last year before they had the chance to donate to him. To honour his remarkable generosity with others, they elected to give life to someone else. Their decision triggered a chain reaction of anonymous kidney donations from friends of the people who benefited from their donation and then from friends of others who had new kidneys thanks to the succession of donors. In the end, Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, helped coordinate ten donors and ten recipients, with potentially even more to come.

What inspires people to behave in such generous ways? I'm convinced that bone-deep generosity is a way of life that has nothing to do with means and everything to do with desire. It's one thing to enjoy spasm of personal generosity - a good deed here and a kindness there. It's another thing to be a person so generous in spirit that a desire to be thankful guides one's entire outlook on life. The American Red Cross reports that the highest numbers of their donations come from the poorest rural county in Mississippi. Those with the least to give, give the most. Why is that?

There's no shortage of reasons for why we give. Sometimes it's for the sake of reputation, or as part of a charity competition, or out of loyalty. Sometimes it's a tax deduction, a sense of human solidarity, or some inner satisfaction that inspires us. But so many forms of giving involve careful calculation on our part. We're so busy trying to estimate the return on our investment or trying to ensure that we're the most effective stewards of our resources that we lose sight of the fundamental joy that undergirds true generosity.

Usually we think feelings of joy are a result or by-product of generosity. I think joy precedes generosity. Joy is the disposition that enables generosity in the first place. To hear Bethany and Hannah Goralski speak of their joy in donating a vital human organ is to hear their father's joy echoing through their lives. Our scripture this morning reflects Jesus' joy and playfulness and generosity with healing the ten lepers. Even though only one was joyful and generous in return.

At church council this week, we were thankful for all the joyful generosity that keeps this boat afloat. Ben is going to come share thankfulness for our work.

In celebration of Christ's joyful generosity and healing, we are invited to the table where God intends us to be nourished. This is the time when Christ can heal us. So come, all who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith, for a better life, for a fairer world. Jesus Christ who has sat at our tables, now invites us to be guests at his. We will sing a hymn of response and preparation.