

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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“There are three conversions necessary to every man: the head, the heart, and the purse.” Attributed to Luther, though yet to be located in his vast writings, this statement echoes what Jesus taught about hearts and treasures. He said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34).

But which conversion comes first? I submit that the order is this: first the head, then the purse, then the heart. Let me explain.

Our Lord Jesus Christ dwelt among us to save us. He took on our flesh, fulfilled the demands of the law in our place, became sin for us, and suffered torture and death on our behalf, in order that we would be free from sin, death, and hell. He gives us what He accomplished through Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper.

And so, He doesn’t just do it for us but gives it to us, makes what He did ours by making us His. Thus, we are called by His name: Christians. We have a new life in Him.

Through the preaching of Law and Gospel, God grants us repentance, a changing of our minds. It is a conversion of the mind. We are called to turn away from our sins and turn toward Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation. For when God calls us away from something, He is, at the same time, calling us to something.

And thus, He calls us to a new life, with new deeds. This is the conversion of the purse. Jesus said that “it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24). “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Notice that our hearts follow our treasures, not the other way around. As Christians, God calls us to invest our treasures in His Kingdom to ensure that the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. He calls us to share all good things with the one who teaches us the doctrines of Christ. He calls us to be generous in giving to the church, for it is more blessed to give than to receive.

So where is your treasure? If it is not invested in the kingdom of God, then the only response is repentance—a conversion of the heart—and to begin doing just that. And as our Lord promised, where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

This is not to say that you earn your way into heaven. It is simply to say that as Christians, those who have been made to be temples of the Holy Spirit, who have been given a new life in Christ, who are dead to sin and now alive in Him, we are, actually, to live — think (conversion of the mind), do (conversion of the purse), and be (conversion of the heart) — a new life in Him.

And when you fail, know that God in Christ loves and forgives you and still calls you away from that and to Himself.