

## God's Generous Economy

<sup>17</sup> To all the rich of this world, I command you not to be wrapped in thoughts of pride over your prosperity, or rely on your wealth, for your riches are unreliable and nothing compared to the living God. Trust instead in the one who lavishes upon us all good things, fulfilling our every need.

<sup>18</sup> Remind the wealthy to be rich in remarkable works of extravagant generosity, willing to share with others. <sup>19</sup> These spiritual investments will provide a beautiful foundation for their lives and secure for them a great future, as they lay their hands upon the meaning of true life.

—1 Tim. 6:17-19 (The Passion Translation)

Unpacking the last few boxes from our move, Pauline and I looked around our new house in Brentwood and, adding it all up, it was clear to us, we are *the rich of this world*. We not only have a beautiful house, we have food, clothing, transportation, health care, education, and access to recreation. We even have savings accounts, life insurance, and pension plans. Someone once said, if you own more than one pair of shoes and any form of transportation, then you are rich. With that definition and in comparison to many places around the globe, we, you and I, all are *the rich of this world*.

Wealth can evoke a myriad of responses. Unfortunately two common responses are pride and/or guilt. Many who are rich are proud of the hard work they have put in to gaining for themselves such riches. Others who are rich feel guilty at having so much while others have so very little. But neither pride nor guilt have a place in God's *oikonomia* (the Greek word for "household management," and from which we get the word "economy"). Rather in God's economy, all are steeped in the foundational belief that the riches we enjoy are from the "living God...who lavishes upon us all good things, fulfilling our every need." (1 Tim. 6:17) It's this belief (faith, trust) that evokes the twin responses of gratitude and generosity. In God's economy it is gratitude and generosity which are the response-abilities of those who are a part a God's household.

It seems to me that you, Saint Andrew, are an extravagantly generous household of God, giving not only to our regular ministry spending plan but also to a variety of special causes throughout the year. You make a difference, not only to our household of faith, but locally and globally through the various community and ELCA ministries you support. By responding with gratitude and generosity you are stating that you value

how our congregation richly blesses our local community through a plethora of service activities.

Your gratitude and generosity also demonstrate how much you value the proclamation of the gospel, the proclamation of the nearness of God's *oikouμία*. You already know that you have a place in God's economy, God's household. But, many do not know this truth. If all are to live into the truth that they have a place in God's household already, we need to unpack a few more boxes and move a few more lives. Imagine how many lives would be transformed if we invested our gratitude and extravagant generosity even more richly in God's economy? Why, the return on investment is promised to be nothing less than true life for all.

With gratitude for you,

Pastor Eric