

A different sense of prosperity

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There are people I know who live their lives very sacrificially, just like Moses and Paul did. Moses was called by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, something he was not willing to do at first; but God persisted, supporting Moses in his sacrifice doing what God wanted. The people I know do this too. They respond to God's call to care for the poor, the naked, the hungry and those in prison. In loving their neighbor, often far away from their own country, they live sacrificially to love God and their neighbor.

Paul delights in this: "So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us." (1 Thes: 2:8) Paul wants "to please God who tests our hearts." (1 Thes: 2:4)

The people I know live sacrificially; they could easily earn much more if they lived in the United States or Canada, and live much more securely; they have chosen to not follow the advice of the wicked. They really are "like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper." (Psalm 1:3)

The people I know have a different sense of how they prosper. Their currency of exchange is really not money, but how much they love their God and their neighbor. Elizabeth of the Trinity, a 19th century Carmelite nun, said, "Let us ask God to make us true in our love, to make us sacrificial beings, for it seems to me that sacrifice is only love put into action."

Christians who love God and their neighbor have the currency of the baptismal covenant to guide us. Our currency is God's love. "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad our days." (Psalm 90:1) In rejoicing and in being glad our all days, God's love is all we need to prosper.

In our baptismal covenant Christians declare their belief in God, Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit. We, with God's help, declare that we will continue in fellowship, the breaking of the bread, prayer, resisting evil and repenting, proclaiming the Good News, seeking and serving Christ in all persons and loving our neighbor, striving for justice and peace and respecting the dignity of every human being. In Canada, Anglicans also agree to strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth.

The people I know live their lives sacrificially in the way that Elizabeth of the Trinity suggested we all do. In rejecting the rampant consumerism of the age, in rejecting the disparity between the super-rich and the poor, we are called to live sacrificially as we live out our baptismal covenant, loving God and loving our neighbor just as the people I know do, as did Moses and Paul.

For reflection...

- Do you know people, as I do, who live their lives sacrificially? Make a list if you do. Learn about it — ask why they live so sacrificially by listening for God and loving their neighbor.
- How could you live your life more sacrificially and encourage others to do the same?



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