



November 2024

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

Erma Bombeck (1927-1996) was a beloved American writer. Her humor, in newspaper columns and 15 books, was flavored with inspiration and wisdom. She concluded a newspaper column published on March 10, 1987 with these insights (my emphasis in bold):

*"I always had a dream that when I am asked to give an accounting of my life to a higher court, it will go like this: 'So, **empty your pockets**. What have you got left of your life? Any dreams that were unfulfilled? Any unused talent that we gave you when you were born that you still have left? Any unsaid compliments or bits of love that you haven't spread around?'"*

"And I will answer, 'I've nothing to return. I spent everything you gave me. I'm as naked as the day I was born.'"

This season of Thanksgiving (a specific day in November in these United States while for Canadians it's a day in October) is a beautiful time of the year, a prelude to Christmas with all of its wonderful themes and lessons, filled with gratitude that produces generosity.

We are thankful for *all those in our lives who emptied their pockets for us*. We think of the self-sacrificial love parents extended to us. We remember those who opened doors for us, stood up, by and for us, who mentored and taught us and upon whose shoulders we now stand. The list of others who have given of themselves for us is a long one for each of us—we do well to follow the advice of that old Christian hymn: **Count Your Blessings**.

Counting our physical blessings and giving thanks for other humans who have emptied their pockets for our benefit is only the first step for Christ-followers. The all-important second step involves deeper and more transcendent spiritual gratitude, for truly, most importantly, we thank **Jesus who emptied his pockets for us**:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

The context for this remarkable verse about the self-giving and self-impoverishment of Jesus on behalf of all humanity is the always delicate topic of physical giving. History tells us that the Christ-followers who lived in the city of Jerusalem following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, up until the city was destroyed and razed to the ground by the Romans in 69-70, endured extreme poverty.

Christians in Jerusalem, the mother-city of Christianity, were a minority who no doubt experienced much hostility from family and friends who were racial Jews, as the Christian Jews were, but remained Jewish in their faith and religious practices. Jewish Christians in Jerusalem during this time were no doubt ostracized and excluded from economic opportunities, even after they themselves, as recorded in the book of Acts, had given much to others in the early days of the Christian faith. Paul appealed to the Corinthians to give because of Jesus Christ who had given so much to them.

Paul carefully broaches this need of the primarily Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to the primarily Gentile Christians in Corinth in both of his letters to them. What Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is a new covenant philosophy of giving, giving which relies on the generosity and grace of the giver, not upon the requirements of the old covenant mandating a strict ten percent. He explains that Christ-centered generosity flows out of thanksgiving and gratitude.

In the following powerful, inspiring and illuminating passage about physical separations and divisions caused by race and culture that Paul shared with Christ-followers in Ephesus, I have enumerated **seven ways in which Jesus emptied his pockets for us**:

For 1) *he himself is our peace*, who 2) *has made the two groups one* and 3) *has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility*, by 4) *setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations*. 4) *His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two*, 5) *thus making peace*, and in one body 6) *to reconcile both of them to God through the cross*, 7) *by which he put to death their hostility* (Ephesians 2:14-16, my emphasis).

Notice the emphasis—for those who embrace the grace of God and follow Jesus, he has destroyed hostility and made peace. Here are seven encapsulated reasons why we Christ-followers are thankful, seven fruits of peace and love Jesus displayed by emptying his pockets for us, giving us his all, his very life, on his Cross.

In the parable of the talents—also called *minas* in more modern translations (Matthew 25:14-30) and in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27), Jesus presents the gospel as a God-given gift, and we, the recipients, are charged to use the gift(s) we have been given. As we *empty our pockets, pay forward the grace of God, and give our lives away*, we are *loving as God loves us—loving others* without any guarantee of return. Giving without any expectation of an in-kind return.

I am reminded of a pastor who made an impassioned plea to his congregation to **empty their pockets**. “Will you please, at the very least, as we pass my hat through the congregation, *empty your pockets* of your loose change to help us pay for the many expenses we have?” When the deacon returned with the offering, the pastor looked into the hat and saw three nickels and six pennies. The pastor paused, and then said, “Thanks to the few of you who have given *just a little bit* of your loose change, and to all of you, thanks for at least returning my hat!”

How and when we give, we may give thanks we are able to give, and that Christ Jesus lives his life of generosity within us, even as Paul told the Corinthians: *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Most of all, we empty our own pockets because that is the Jesus Way. Generosity is the life of Christ in us—and all of our giving is framed by the greatest gift of all, Jesus, who emptied his own pockets for us: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

What We Cannot Live Without

There was a country boy who grew up far from town. After his marriage he finally visited town with his bride. In an old country-store he saw a stalk of bananas. The clerk noticed his fascination, and hoping to make a sale, asked: “Do you want to try one? I’m sure you will like it.”

The young man, who some would dismiss as a “country bumpkin” responded with wisdom beyond his years, “No, I reckon not. I’ve got so many tastes now that I can’t satisfy them, and I ain’t aimin’ to take up any more.”

As Garrison Keillor said in “Lake Wobegon Days”: *“Some luck lies in not getting what you thought you wanted, but getting what you have, which, once you have it, you may be smart enough to see, is what you would have wanted, had you known.”*

I remember the story of an Amish man who momentarily stopped plowing his field to watch a new non-Amish neighbor move in to the new housing development that bordered his property. The Amish man watched as a huge refrigerator was unloaded, then a mammoth big screen television, dozens of “labor saving appliances” and finally a whirlpool hot tub.

The next day the Amish man and his wife brought homemade muffins and jam to their new neighbors. After they exchanged pleasantries, the Amish man and his wife dismissed themselves, saying, “If anything should go wrong with all your appliances and equipment, don’t hesitate to call me.”

The new resident said. “Wow! That’s very generous of you. I had no idea you were able to fix so many of these newer appliances and electronic devices.” The new neighbor, the Amish man responded: “I have no idea about how to repair your material possessions. But when they stop working, *I can tell you how to live without them.*”

In Christ, because of him, by and through him, we are most privileged and blessed spiritually, for Jesus indeed has emptied himself for us. He has emptied far more than his pockets, but all of himself, on his Cross. He poured himself out for us.

We cannot live without Jesus—indeed, as he tells us, without him we are nothing (John 15:5). Thus, we recall the simple question Paul posed in 1 Corinthians 4:7, *What do you have that you did not receive?*

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Thankful for Him, In His Precious Name,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. We share this letter from a Partner in Minnesota whose life has been changed by the ministry of CWR/PTM. And **THANK YOU** for all you do to support this ongoing ministry!

Thank you for your New Covenant messages. I was a member of a legalistic church for about 30 years or so. It was quite a mixed-bag experience. My spiritual life has been turned upside-down and inside-out, but I am glad you are telling me and others about the true love of God and his amazing grace toward all of us children!!!

CWR/PTM Prayer List—November 2024

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please pray for me as I have painful arthritis and it is hard to write and do many things I need to do.—California

Please pray for me—I had a recent surgery and now I'm undergoing chemotherapy.—North Carolina

Please pray for my dear friend who lost her husband of 60-plus years due to a stroke. Please pray for all their children and grandchildren.—Virginia

Please pray for my 42-year-old daughter. The doctor found a large nodule on her thyroid.—New York

I'm suffering with a lot of pain in my back and several other health issues. Please pray for me.—Rhode Island

Please pray about my heart issues, enlarged prostate, and financial concerns.—Missouri

Please pray for my friend's daughter and her son. They are in an abusive environment.—Michigan

Please continue to keep me in your prayers. My back and hips still give me a lot of pain. Thanks for all your prayers.—Georgia

Please pray for my wife's continued recovery from surgeries. Thank you in advance.—California

Please pray for my niece's husband. He has follicular lymphoma. Pray they will find a successful treatment for him.—Kentucky

Please pray for my aging parents. My father wants to travel like he has for years, but he is in assisted living and his health makes it almost impossible. My mother has dementia.—Wisconsin

I continue to pray for my PTM family every day. May God bless you and enable you to keep up the good work.—Alabama

Please pray for my nephew who is dying from lung cancer. Thank you for all your prayers and encouraging words.—Kansas

Please pray for my daughter who has joined Alcoholics Anonymous. Pray that Jesus will continue to be with her and be her true Focus.—Michigan

I'm suffering with chronic kidney disease. Please pray for my healing, comfort and relief.—Texas

Please pray for physical healing in my right leg and right eye. Thanks in advance for your prayers.—Louisiana

Please continue to pray for me and my family. I suffered a heart issue a few months ago and I'm still recovering.—New York

Please pray for my brother who is in bad health and mentally ill. Pray that he will seek help.—Massachusetts

I'm suffering with chronic pain in my lower back and hip, as well as anxiety. Please pray for me.—South Carolina

Please pray for my eye surgery coming up; pray for the steady hands of the surgeon and a successful outcome without infection or complications.—Georgia

My daughter's lung cancer metastasized to her brain. Please pray for healing and encouragement.—California

Please pray for my husband—he had surgery for cancer a few months ago and he lost his sense of taste.—North Carolina

I need prayers—the doctor found a mass on my right kidney and a lump in my throat obstructing my airway. I'm on oxygen every night and I have a lot of headaches, too. Thank you.—Alabama

Please pray for my grandson who seems angry and confused. Pray that God will give him peace and purpose.—Maryland

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.