



## MARCH MEDITATION

“For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.” II Corinthian 8:3-5 (ESV)

If you were raised in the Lutheran church, you remember the words of this offertory:

*We give thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift may be; all that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.  
May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive, And gladly, as Thou blessest us, to Thee our first fruits give.*

We sang this offertory as children and youth in the 1940s and 1950s. Like many things memorized, we probably did not pay much attention to the lyrics. But we are older now and can read these words with fresh eyes. This beautiful prayer reminds us that God is the giver, we are His stewards, and He asks us for a joyful response.

***All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord, from thee.***

First, we cannot give God anything. Whatever we offer, we had to receive from God first. He is the sole provider of everything we have. Think about everything you have – good health, secure housing, financial means, family, friends, food, security, a job, and more. It all came from God.

***May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive***

Second, once we acknowledge that God is the Giver, we ask that we be true stewards of those gifts we receive. Of all those things listed in the previous paragraph, we ask for guidance in using them in ways that honor God. Those things came to us by God, and He asks us to manage what He has entrusted to us.

***And gladly, as Thou blessest us, to thee our first fruits give.***

And third, we understand that we have been blessed and pray that our giving is a joyful response to God's generosity to us. So, whether you live in a single room or mansion – live paycheck-to-paycheck or have a well-funded retirement fund – eat rice and beans every day or steak and potatoes – God asks us to bless others.

We are liberated knowing God as the giver of all we have. We can be assured that God will continue to provide. When Jesus said we shouldn't be worried about anything, He meant it (Matthew 6:24). When Paul said he had learned to be content with whatever he had (Philippians 4:11), it was grounded in the faith that God had already given him, and us, enough. We have enough to be the people God wants us to be and to have the lives God wants us to have.