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Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled

By Jan Wood

This morning I have been reflecting on how grateful I am for my family experiences around money. For most of my growing up years, we were poor. Poor for-a-purpose, mind you—my father was getting his doctorate so he could take his place in higher education—but poor nevertheless. There were times when we simply did not have the money to pay our bills or buy the food (fortunately you could run a tab of credit at the local grocery store in those days). I have vivid memories from my early teen years of Dad calling us to family council to share with us whatever dire need was at hand. Then all of us would kneel by our chairs at the kitchen table and ask God for provision. And when the miracle of provision came—as it always did—we all knew that though circumstances would come and go, God was our provider. I don't ever remember finding ourselves bereft of what we needed.

My childhood is a repository of memories of God's provision. Being poor held no terror for me, because I knew that God is a good and loving provider. Not just for crisis moments and emergencies—but for the everyday partnership in all the aspects of our economic life. Partnership as we work, as we buy and consume, as we share and bless others, as we pool together for the common good through our taxes and our tithes. God totally understands our wants and needs—and has committed the powers of Godness to take care of us. It is the foundation of the covenant relationship from Genesis to Revelation.

In later years I also came to understand that God is not a minimalist! God's love delights to give us the desires of our hearts, the special, even the frivolous. I have learned that there is no relationship to one's financial condition and happiness. Like Apostle Paul, we can be happy if we have lots or if we have little. God is constantly confounding the conventional economic wisdoms that try to terrorize and crush us.

It would probably be easy to trust God around provision if it meant we each got to control the shape of our lives. But God is not promising to honor that idolatrous "American

*Peace, I leave with you, my peace I give to you.
Let not your hearts be troubled,
neither let them be afraid.
John 14: 27*

And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom and these things shall be yours as well.

Luke 12:29-31

Dream.” There is no guarantee as to what the configuration of our lives will be. Some will have good and steady incomes that appear worry free while others will live on the proverbial manna. Some will have their homes’ foreclosed; some will become millionaires. God’s provision does not depend upon circumstances. God’s promise is that whatever life throws at us, God will make it useful/good for us. (Romans 8:28) We

can depend on God to give us joy and purpose. We release our striving and fears—and let God be our provider.

Trusting God with and in our financial lives is a primary demonstration that we are living in Kingdom relationship with God. It is a sign that we have been saved. And as we continue to migrate from the culture around us to the Culture of God, we become a beacon of hope to an American economic system in turmoil.

Just as I learned to trust God financially through my childhood experiences, we all learn how to trust by being in situations that require it. For instance, we have known that energy conservation was a good thing to do. But it wasn’t until gas prices topped \$4.00 a gallon that all of us started to act differently. And so it is with learning to trust God’s provision. We know it is true that God is taking care of us when we have a steady salary and life feels “secure.” But it moves from our head to our being when we hit hard times and experience the sturdiness of God’s care. So paradoxically, these are troubling and exciting times! Naturally we have worries and things may look uncertain and frightening. But we will all be led and taught how this works by the God who loves us and yearns for us to be right-sized and free. We are all going to have the opportunity to live out the economic truth of the Kingdom in personal and nation changing ways. This will be life saving for us and those we love. It holds the possibility of being life saving for an American Dream that has lost its way.

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