

When Everything Costs More

May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him. -Psalm 67:7

Everything is costing more these days: the pandemic makes our social life cost more; the sanctions make our utilities and travel cost more; the war in Ukraine makes our democracy cost more; the rising interest rate makes our housing cost more; the climate crisis makes our meals cost more; the attitude of society makes truth cost more.... We could add to this list the things that make mental and physical health, spiritual care, committed relationships, recreation cost more too. Even freedom is more costly!

When everything costs more, we are tempted to become more anxious, more selfish, more defensive about our needs. In Matthew 16:5-12, Jesus points to the faith crisis that lurks under these reactions to increasing costs: “the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Pharisees believe that God helps those who strictly apply God’s Law to every life situation. Sadducees believe that God helps those who worship God properly and willingly and give the required offerings joyfully. “Watch out!” Jesus says. Instead of this “do-it-right-or-else” faith, Jesus reminds them that they had been part of two wonderful experiences when God’s grace was demonstrated on a large scale. “Do you remember how many baskets full of breadcrumbs you picked up when we fed the 5000 with the five loaves? The 4000 with the seven loaves?” Certainly they remembered—and their anxious, selfish, defensive reactions too! The stories are told in Matthew 14:13-21 and Matthew 15:32-39.

Psalm 67 helps us get past the anxiety when everything costs more. God has blessed us; God will continue to bless us. This Psalm helps us get outside ourselves when rising costs worry us: “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth.” It helps us lower our defenses and stay generous: “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.” When everything costs more, Psalm 67 helps us trust God anyway.

There is nothing that costs more than God’s grace. As the Lutheran Catechism puts it: “I believe that [Jesus Christ has redeemed me] from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold but with his holy, precious blood and his innocent suffering and death...that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true!” This costly grace makes everything more precious: the gift of our lives, the gifts of food and drink, the gifts of time together, the gifts of travel and recreation, the gifts of health and home, the gifts of worship and prayer, the gifts of faith and hope, the gifts of love and peace.... We could add to this list the ways that so many things we often take for granted are so much more precious to us right now! And with each precious gifts put on the list, we can hardly stop ourselves from thanking God and praising God and telling people about God’s grace and sharing with others what God has given us. When everything costs more, its more precious—and we thank God even more!