

Called and Sent to Love and Serve... *With Joy*



A story from Katharine Hepburn's childhood (about 100 years ago), in her own words:

Once when I was a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus.

Finally, there was only one other family between us and the ticket counter. This family made a big impression on me.

There were eight children, all probably under the age of 12. The way they were dressed, you could tell they didn't have a lot of money, but their clothes were neat and clean.

The children were well-behaved, all of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands. They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, animals, and all the acts they would be seeing that night. By their excitement you could sense they had never been to the circus before. It would be a highlight of their lives.

The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be. The mother was holding her husband's hand, looking up at him as if to say, "You're my knight in shining armor." He was smiling and enjoying seeing his family happy.

The ticket lady asked the man how many tickets he wanted? He proudly responded, "I'd like to buy eight children's tickets and two adult tickets, so I can take my family to the circus." The ticket lady stated the price.

The man's wife let go of his hand, her head dropped, the man's lip began to quiver. Then he leaned a little closer and asked, "How much did you say?" The ticket lady again stated the price.

The man didn't have enough money. How was he supposed to turn and tell his eight kids that he didn't have enough money to take them to the circus?

Seeing what was going on, my dad reached into his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill, and then dropped it on the ground. (We were not wealthy in any sense of the word!) My father bent down, picked up the \$20 bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, "Excuse me, sir, this fell out of your pocket."

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The man understood what was going on. He wasn't begging for a handout but certainly appreciated the help in a desperate, heartbreaking, and embarrassing situation.

He looked straight into my dad's eyes, took my dad's hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the \$20 bill, and with his lip quivering and a tear streaming down his cheek, he replied, "Thank you, thank you, sir. This really means a lot to me and my family."

My father and I went back to our car and drove home. The \$20 that my dad gave away is what we were going to buy our own tickets with.

Although we didn't get to see the circus that night, we both felt a joy inside us that was far greater than seeing the circus could ever provide.

The witness of many is that there is joy in being able to bless other lives, including by doing so financially. We have the opportunity to experience much joy through our regular giving that supports the ministry of Christ the King as well as the I-K Synod and ELCA.

Regular, systematic giving can help all of us become more generous and experience great joy. We get overwhelmed when we think about larger numbers like \$1,000. However, most of us can find \$2.75 per day.

As you think and pray about your generosity this year, consider how systematic giving may help you become more generous. Use weekly envelopes, set up a regular gift to be withdrawn from your bank account, or plan the withdrawals from your IRA using Qualified Charitable Deductions that are given tax free. Systematic, regular giving is the key to fulfilling one's good intentions. It can help all of us become more generous and experience great joy.



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