



**NEW SCANDINAVIA LUTHERAN
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³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Acts 4:32-35

I have been wondering lately what it would look like; a new group of people gathering and doing what the Acts text describes. This group is encouraged to sell all they have and to pool their money together. When someone is in need, the money comes from the communal fund. How far could that money go? In this situation you do not have rich and poor, hungry, and overfed, insiders and outsiders. In this community, all are seen as having unique gifts while seeing everyone as an important person within the larger group. How do we look at others if the focus is on caring for others and not only the self?

The truth is, I have heard of communities like that before but unfortunately, we end up labeling these groups as a cult and some crazy leader gets arrested or there is a mass suicide.

Personally, they all start out seeming like a promising idea but then one person/one family steps in and, as they say, the rest is history.

But what would the world look like if that one person did not come forward to take advantage of the group mentality? What if this idea worked as intended and some did not feel the need to be greedy and take more than is allotted to them? Why do we feel it is ok to have wealthy people AND starving people, sometimes within the same community? Why is it that, on average, more low-income people give away a higher percentage of their goods than higher-income groups?

When I was in South Dakota, the church custodian was a member of one of the local tribal communities. She was a single mother of three and had a difficult life. One day she called to say that she could not make it to work because her car was not working, and she did not have the money to fix it. The next week she was back at work, but with a different car. She said a guy that lived down the road from her found a reliable car for sale, and it was a fair price (cheap). People within the community pooled their money and bought her the car. I asked what she had to do in return. She looked at me like I was crazy as she explained that is what they do. What a strange concept, I thought. Who does that?

On Christmas that year, I gifted her \$100 to buy her kids some Christmas presents. She did not know what to say as no one has ever given her that kind of money with instructions to just spend it on what she wants (not needs). After Christmas I asked what she got her kids and as she explained, I thought it sounded like a few dollar-store items. I gave her \$100, and she just bought a few gifts at the dollar store? She went on to say that she spent about \$30 on herself and the girls and used the rest to help people with rent, purchase food, or help with gas money. My first thought was “but that was for YOU. I am not sure if I am ok with you spending MY money on people I do not know.” I took a deep breath, and my second thought was wow”. You stretched that money farther than I could have done.”

“Heather’s” way of thinking blew my mind. Furthermore, it is not like she would only help people within her tribe but ANYONE who needed something. One day she told me that an elderly person in the community needed an air-conditioner as her box fan was not able to cool the house in the 100+ degree days we had been having. “Heather” gave me the heads-up that if I found an air conditioner at a thrift store, I should get it for this lady. That was typical “Heather;” she would step forward to help because, growing up as part of a tribe, which is what the children are taught. How different is the tribal mentality vs how we live?

The truth is Heather’s way of thinking is not uncommon. There are places throughout the world where people live in healthy communities where all work for the common good. It is in wealthy nations, where money is central, that Heather’s life is out of place. But why? What has money done to us?

I will ask the question again- how would it look if we took hold of that tribal/group way of living? Could we be happy sharing our wealth in ways that no one must go without food or other basic needs? What stops us from even trying?

The peace of Christ be with you

Pastor Sara