

Laden with Money

Living Grace has always been blessed with money. We've always met our budget. In the beginning, our commitments were low. We had no building to maintain and stayed at the school chapel of Concordia College free of charge in return for doing ministry to the school boarders. To give you some figures, in 2007 we averaged 262 people on Sunday and our giving averaged \$4,961. This was good and supported five staff (3 full-time, two part-time). Right now, however, we raise the same amount of money with half the people – 132 people on Sunday and giving \$5000 on average. This is incredible. It means that our giving doubled compared to only eight years ago. [I do not know how I should adjust for inflation but there is also the giving that goes directly into our building fund.]

In 2008, we suffered the breakaway of about a third of our members which had an effect on our emotions but also on our giving – the income of the church. We were using up our reserves while we were working through the shock of separation and sorting ourselves out. Concordia College wanted us to move on and, with no reserves in the bank and expenditure being higher than our income, we went looking for an alternative venue. This property (90 Jellicoe St) came on the market and was the perfect answer to my prayers (“God, I’m not a pastor for a building program.”). The price tag was \$780,000 which was a bargain but we had no money. Yet, we stepped out in faith, another church guaranteed our bank loan because we ourselves had no credit history, and – only six years later – we have already paid off more than half a million dollars. There are now about \$230,000 debt left. Amazing. How did this happen? Apart from a fund raising campaign right at the beginning, we have never again had a money raising drive. And yet, the debt is disappearing.

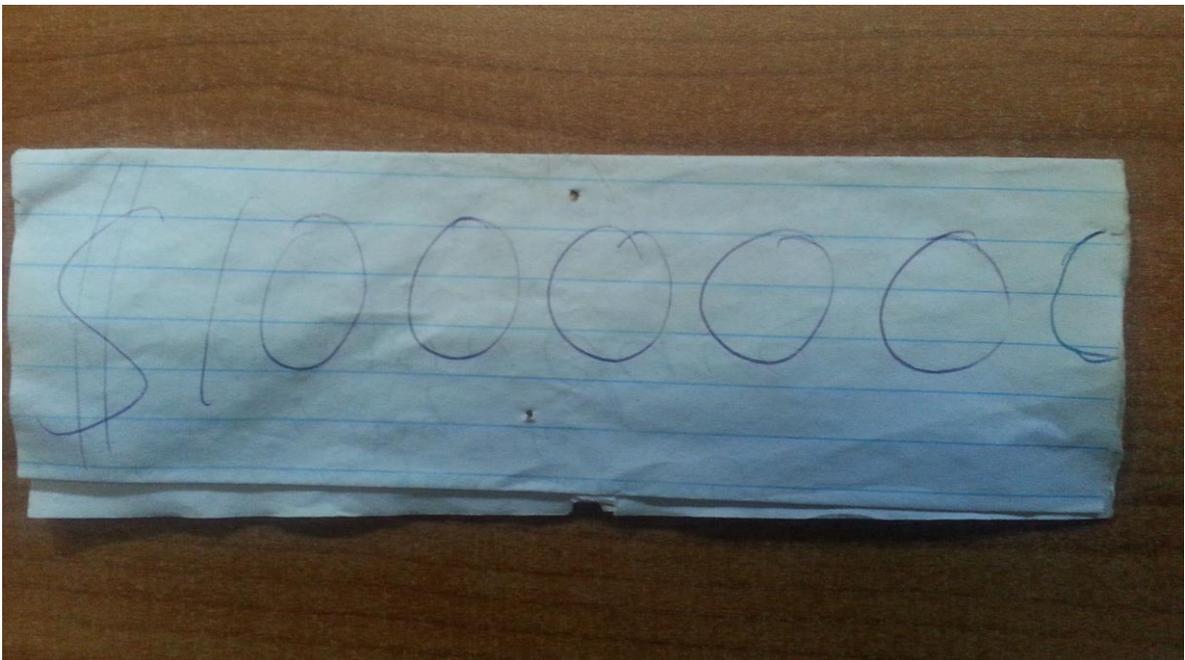
I don't mind preaching about finances (like today) but God hardly ever seems to take me there. We never have special offering talks. And yet, the importance of giving – the spiritual nature of tithing or giving something to God as our “first fruits” – is in our community.

We had another tight spot where for a long time (a year or longer), we were \$1200 below budget every week. But we have always paid our bills and turned a corner. This congregation is incredibly generous and many of us are giving sacrificially. And God has increased greatly financial wealth in our midst.

This morning, I want to build on this observation and track some of the prophecies which we have had on finances over the years:

One Million Dollars

A few months before November 2011, David Challenor had the impression that God would give \$1,000,000 towards Jubilee and Living Grace ... I was sceptical ... One Tuesday, David confirmed his impression at WAM. The next Friday we were praying over our finances at the Prayer Watch. Without knowing anything about the \$1,000,000, Joe took something out of his pocket, gave it to me and said, “Here, I give this towards it.” I looked at the piece of paper and slowly realized that it was a \$1,000,000 banknote. It was a mock-up that was used as a Christian flyer but I sensed that God was encouraging our faith. A few weeks later, David came with another folded piece of paper on which was written “\$1,000,000”. It was a thank-you note from Natasha who expressed her gratitude to David and Sonya and the church for saving her life. This piece of paper had been in one of David's rooms for a few months but no one had picked it up. God again seemed to encourage our faith ... Joe's banknote was placed on my desk (for daily seeing with the eyes of faith) and Natasha's note was put before the cross in the church ... [For more than ten months our church finances were \$1200 below budget every week.] ...



Gem Stones

Dream 23 October 2011 (Edgar): In the middle of the night (I think), I dreamt that gem stones had fallen or manifested out of the glory of God in our church (Living Grace) and the congregation was standing in this mass of gem stones which were green (I think). There were so many that the entire worship building was filled up with the gem stones – maybe 1.5m deep (or more) all over the entire expanse of the building.

In the dream, it was clear that this would not only to cover the congregation's debt and expenses but also benefit and bless personally every single member at Living Grace and we could further spend millions of dollars in helping other churches, the LCA, those in need, people overseas, Israel, etc.

On the morning of the miracle, people could take many gem stones home for themselves and we also put aside gem stones for those that did not attend on this Sunday. The only "problem" was that this hardly made a dent into the mass of gem stones and we had to find a way to secure the God-given riches and also be wise in its distribution.

Then, in the morning, I dreamt that I was going to the bank because I wanted to sell some bank shares whose value had fallen. (We don't own shares that are worth anything.) I wanted to use the money to cover some debt. When I was at the bank, I discovered that I owned shares in three further companies (unbeknown to me previously) and these were all worth significantly more than their original purchasing price. Not only would any debt be covered, there was a measure of ongoing wealth.

Monday 24 Oct: I woke up and, remembering the dreams, I could not go back to sleep again because of the excitement in my heart. Then, David Challenor rang later with the news that the Sunday fundraising concert at Concordia College went well and that the Presbyterians (Pastor Rollie Sondergeld) made a commitment to increase their financial support of Jubilee Ministries by \$1000 per month. God seemed to waste no time and seemed to confirm the dreams.

Tuesday 25 Oct: I perused the German daily newspaper "The Sueddeutsche" whose picture of the day was a picture of a huge gem stone (the biggest diamond in the world, worth more than \$10,000,000). This gem stone looked similar (same?) to the ones that I saw in my dream. I made the picture my desktop picture.



Etienne Blom Prophecy

Transcript (Etienne Blom prophesying on Wed 26 Feb 14): I am not a prosperity preacher. Just want to make it clear ... This gentleman here with the black shirt ... yes ... second row ... yeah ... When I walked in earlier this evening, I saw finances. I saw business. I believe there is a time coming that you will have influence in the business world and God's goanna raise up finances through you for the kingdom. It's a different dimension that's goanna come into your life. It's goanna be a different purpose. And God is busy preparing you and aligning you for it. He's positioning you to move into that ... You are a man of wisdom. You are a man of wisdom ... And God's goanna let you influence businesses to align them for the kingdom. There will be business people call you in the future ... seasons to come ... They call you (in the future) into their businesses to ask you for help ... I want to tell you tonight: Think waaay bigger. You think way too little of yourself. Bless you in the name of Jesus.

Sunday 2 March 2014: I acted on the prophecy and prayed first for all self-employed people at Living Grace. We had more than fifty come forward which is an unusual number for our small church.

Positive testimonies flowing from Carl Humphrey, Stephen Sims, Dan Parsons, Trevor Hutton, etc. Challenges for Nathan Tranter, Des Wheeler, etc.

Breakthrough Season

Sunday 15 Feb 15, I shared with the prayer group (8-9am) what happened and that the season has changed. We are allowed to stand up. "It is enough." I prayed again – as I prayed at the Prayer Watch on Thu – for God to give the two Bishops in Qld and Vic repentance or remove them within three months (3 months would be 12 May).

Vicki shared how during the fast and then just this morning, she heard from God: "Call upon me and I will answer you beyond what you can imagine" (words to this effect, precise words from Vicki). Herman ended up preaching on "Breakthrough" (word he received on Tue). He had also heard to pray for breakthrough in the work situation but we (I led but then Letoya suggested for Brett to pray) had already done so straight after the worship => great confirmation. Herman announced that the time of breakthrough was here now for LG (preached on Moses striking the rock twice – stay in tune with God in the right attitude / king who needed to strike the arrows a few times / David twice against the Philistines) ...

The whole church embraced the call to give shaped to a national movement of Lutheran Renewal.

Vicki Meagher's testimony: Two weeks before Christmas 2014 we were discussing prayer and fasting for 7 days in the new year (2015). As time went by, the Lord put on my heart He wanted the first fruits. It became clear He wanted the first day of the year, so I was led by the Holy Spirit into a 40 day fast from the 1st January to 9th of February.

We were going through difficult times in the church (Living Grace), difficult times personally. In general, everything was getting too hard. As always, God has perfect timing. It was such a relief that God took over, took control and set discipline in place. I laid everything down before Him that was weighing so heavy on my heart. He knew everything but I just wanted to make sure.

On Monday the 9th of February (40th day, the day that I found out that the Jesus Tent in Rockhampton was cancelled by the Qld Bishop) I was reading and praying 5-5.30am and words came out of my mouth that had nothing to do with what I was doing. They were all out before I realized what had happened. I did not move or say anything – just sat. It had never happened like that before.

He said: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things thou knowest not."

I was still for about an hour. Then I got angry because for so, so long I had been crying out begging, pleading with Him to do something and in the natural nothing seemed to be happening. So I let it go and walked away from what was said.

On Thursday 5th February (3 days later) – around the same time reading and praying – the exact same thing happened. Words came out of my mouth before I realized. I was in control of nothing.

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things thou knowest not."

I didn't get angry. I just cried, repented and meditated on what he had said – not once but twice. This fast was God's plan. He ordered it. He planned it. All I did was obey. What was it for?

On Sunday 15th February, we all went into the 8am prayer meeting. We were talking. Pastor Edgar told us about his week. The Jesus Tent in Rockhampton had been cancelled. The black mark against him became blacker. Turmoil was still around us but he said that he was excited. He was at peace. He spoke with confidence.

Church began and Pastor Herman was preaching and the word the Lord gave him was "BREAKTHROUGH". My spirit jumped. God's word was being confirmed all morning.

It is a new day – a new beginning. We will have warfare but God has promised: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things thou knowest not." Amen.

Jim White Prophecy

Transcript (28 May 15) – Jim White is ambassador to the nations for the International Association of Healing Rooms headquartered in Spokane Washington: I see you sitting at a table and the table is laden with money. But before you go home and throw a party, hear the Lord saying the wealth is not for you. It's for the kingdom. He has a special anointing on your life to strategically manage kingdom finances. That word may be so farfetched than anything that you have ever heard. But God has given you. There is that wisdom again. You're a manager. You're a manager. God's taking this whole thing higher ...

You are a shadow healer ... You are a Holy Ghoster ... You're not normal. You're a Holy Ghoster ... You are being summoned by God to move up higher ... You're going to be known as one who lives and loves in the presence of the Most High ... You're one of the Carriers. And God's gonna work on you ... You're a Holy Ghoster ... Your shadow will heal the sick ...

The prophecies are encouraging and not really surprising because when spiritual breakthrough comes – when revival comes – it does and must include finances because material wealth is a sign of blessedness (Jesus taught us to pray “as it is in heaven so on earth” and in heaven even the streets are golden) and the need for money increases. When the lost come, they need support and when the mission of the church expands, so do the costs.

God makes general promises about money and he has given us specific ones.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11: Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

How do we inherit these promises? What do we do? Any prophetic words are conditional in the sense that we need to respond to them with faith and lean into them with an expectation that they are going to come true.

For the conditional nature of prophecy see Jeremiah 18:7-10: “If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.” See also Jeremiah 35:17; 36:1-3 and Jonah.

How do you lean into prophecies and promises of abundant resources? What do we do? I think that we have to begin imagining great amounts of extra money – we have to get our administration and due diligence in order – how can we make sure that every dollar is accounted for – **and we have to begin the work of inquiring from God where the money should go. We have to start dreaming with God** – dreams that are as big as he is – we are dreaming about spending money on bigger projects.

What would we do with an extra \$1,000,000? How would we strategize and prioritize? Would we change our tithing practice and make sure that a higher percentage of money is spent outside of Living Grace? Would we step up the Jesus Tent and have ads on TV and more staff presence on the ground? Would we finance Lutheran Renewal pastors whom we plant in key areas to offer charismatic worship services? Would we establish a pathway for ordination that ensures training in the ministry of the Holy Spirit (spiritual gifts, deliverance, discernment, healings and miracles)? **Would Lutheran Renewal finance Holy Spirit intensives for ministry students** – have them come twice a year for a week? With enough money coming in, **we could finance the travel costs for all ministry team members that are going out from Living Grace.**

What would we do overseas? Would we have a different building, more staff, etc.? I don’t know the answer to any of these questions but I know that if the prophetic words are right, we better start thinking and praying about being good stewards for the resources that God wants to give us.

How else do you respond to promises of prosperity? You make sure that you understand some of the basic spiritual principles around money. What are some of the key lessons? This morning, I only give two.

Lesson number one is that we are free from money, that we are not deceived by its false promises of security, identity and power. Money can buy insurances but ultimately all man-made insurances fail (if the disaster is only big enough) **except God. We are not what we earn. We are not what we drive. God is everything and we are his children and he is the one looking after us in all circumstances.**

Matthew 13:22: The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Matthew 6:19: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

1 Timothy 6:6-10: But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge

people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Timothy 6:17-19: Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Hebrews 13:5-6: Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

Matthew 6:31-33: So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

We make sure that we are free from the love of money – free from believing the lies of money that it is money that provides happiness (security, identity and power). **Instead, we love God.**

Matthew 6:24: No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.
Benny Hinn: *The Biblical Road to Blessing*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers 1997, p14: I heard Zig Ziglar say once to a group of people: "I've been poor, and I've been rich. And let me tell you, it's better to be rich!" After the audience stopped laughing, he went on to make a crucial point:
Money will buy a bed but not sleep; books but not brains; food but not appetite; finery but not beauty; a house but not a home; medicine but not health; luxuries but not culture; amusements but not happiness; religion but not salvation.

Be free from loving and relying on money. The second spiritual principle around money is that God puts great value on us giving away some of what we have received from him. Giving is a key spiritual discipline and, like prayer, like fasting, giving unlocks the life with God – the fullness that God has designed for us.

Matthew 6:1-18: Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets ... your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

... when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you ...

... when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Giving is worship. Giving is loving God. Giving is obedience. Giving is sacrifice. Giving is demonstrating trust in God – especially when we give according to the principle of the "first fruits" (Deuteronomy 26:1-10). **Giving** – like faith – as an expression of our faith in God and his promises – **activates a return from God** – much bigger than what we have been giving back to God. **The Bible talks about the principle of sowing and reaping:**

Malachi 3:8-12: "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'"

"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the LORD Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.

Galatians 6:7-10: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a

harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8: Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Luke 6:38: Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

It seems that like holding on to a grudge and unforgiveness, **a stingy heart blocks the free flow of God's love and generosity.**

Matthew 6:14-15: For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Now how much should we give back to God from our income? The people of God in the Bible have always practiced tithing – giving away a tenth of their income – and then added other offerings to this basic tithe. The principle of the tithe has been there from the beginning – even before the giving of the law through Moses – and Jesus seemed to affirm it. But more about him later.

Hebrews 7:1-2: This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything ...

Leviticus 27:30: A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

Matthew 23:23: Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

I tell you a testimony ...

How much does God want you to give? When are you too poor not to give anything? I find it interesting that God told Benny Hinn clearly that he wanted his last dime and it would be this dime that would unlock heaven's blessings for him. God tested him on his resolve to give. There is spiritual discipline and warfare around giving.

People argue that you should not make a law out of anything; therefore any insistence on tithing is too rigid and not necessarily coming out of a relationship with God. But the tithe is certainly a useful guide and you can always be sensitive to Jesus asking you for more:

Mark 12:41-44: Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Luke 14:25-35: Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple ... In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples ..."

Matthew 19:21-24: Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

I close with another Bible story of miraculous provisions:

Mark 6:35-44: By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

What did Jesus do in anticipation of the miracle? He organized seating arrangements and the administration of the miracle. What would we have to do to get ready for a much higher income? Then, what did God use to perform the miracle? He used what they had – five loaves and two fish. And giving these up to God – thanking God for them – God made them multiply – with twelve basketfuls of leftovers.

We do have prophecies of abundant financial blessings, why not in this season of breakthrough lean into them? First, we make sure that we are free of the love of money and only love God. And then, we give (be careful to apply the spiritual discipline of giving) – if need be all of our little lunch (five loaves and two fish) – and then wait for the miracle. It will come. Amen.

Smethurst News – Harvest Time, September 2015: In 1993 I conducted an evangelism series in a Russian church in Riga, Latvia. In one weekend about 500 people learnt how to share their faith in Jesus, lead people to Christ and bring them into the local church. They did this immediately and so well, that hundreds came to the Lord in a short space of time and joined the fellowship. In the next 4 years they went out in teams and won so many to Christ that they started over 50 churches in Latvia and 4 other nations.

One of those areas where churches were planted was in Cherepovets and Vologda, Russia some 500 kms north of Moscow. Two churches grew up there and planted out other churches as well as a Bible School that trained and sent out missionaries and pastors.

Two people affected by this were Pastors Vladimir & Tatiana Motjo. Vladimir is now bishop of that region.

Vladimir shared this wonderful story with my Latvian manager, a few weeks ago. He said a pastor from one of the churches nearby experienced such growth that they needed a bigger building. They prayed for a new church building but they could not find one for a long time. Finally there was an opportunity to purchase a rather large and very expensive building through an auction. They borrowed the money for the first instalment to be part of the auction, and they won the auction.

But had no money to continue the purchase. So pastor asked the church to pray and fast. They fasted for many days, asking God for money to buy the building but nothing happened. After 21 days of prayer and fasting - nothing happened. After 40 days still nothing had happened.

Then one night the pastor was in bed and the Angel of God appeared to him and said: “You have been crying out to heaven, for heaven to give you money. But I want you to know, there is NO money in heaven. We cannot give you what we do not have. We use no money there. But I’ve been sent to give you a key which will unlock the earthly treasures for you. All you need to do is feed the hungry, clothe the naked, take care of the orphans, widows and fatherless. Take care of the poor and riches of the earth will come to you!”

The pastor listened and obeyed. Today they have their building fully paid for. They don’t have great numbers in the church but they are one of the most precious evangelistic churches in Russia. Still feeding the poor, housing the homeless and taking care of orphans and widows.

What a beautiful story. What a great encouragement!