

## *Devotion from the past ... 2006*

Extended reading: [Ecclesiastes 3:12–15](#)

# **Eat, Drink, and Enjoy Your Gift**

“That's it—eat, drink, and make the most of your job. It's God's gift” (Ecclesiastes 3:13 *MSG*).

The Lord be with you.

Our ministries sometimes seem an act of evolution. We experience constant change, much of it on a whim, but often not whimsical.

- Disintegrating, disillusioned, and dysfunctional governing boards
- Church workers mistreated by congregations and vice versa
- Lutheran schools ... expanding, shriveling, surviving
- Youth ministries stunned by fatal automobile accidents
- Budgets streaking downward as quickly as gas prices spiral upward

But then ...

- Courageous, conscientious, and creative governing boards
- Church workers determined to complete 45 sacrificial years in ministry
- Lutheran schools redefining and renewing excellence, thriving
- Youth ministries stimulated, reinvigorated through service to others
- Budgets rescued by extraordinary stewardship

The future of Christian ministries always lies in excellence. The future—and its excellence—is part of your responsibility. And you can even enjoy it! Not that sin doesn't interrupt the good time! But church work, like many other elements in earthly life, runs in cycles closely associated with the theological concepts of Law and Gospel.

To hear Solomon talk, one is almost resigned to futility. Verse 15 (“Whatever was, is. Whatever will be, is. That's how it always is with God.”) sounds like an old Doris Day song. So why do you work in your Lutheran school or congregation? Why do congregation members spend time and money on the vagaries of Lutheran schools and their sometimes capricious ministries? God knows what's going to happen (or not!) at [name of your school or congregation].

In our sinfulness, we're not always sure what is success and what is failure. Sometimes even our “good” goals doom us to failure. Luther once said, “God's

counsel and will tower high above our own counsel and will. Hence, when we ask anything of God and He begins to hear us, He so often goes counter to our petitions that we imagine He is more angry with us now than before we prayed, and that He intends not to grant us our requests at all. All this God does, because it is His way first to destroy and annihilate what is in us—our own wisdom and will—before He gives us His gifts .... Through this most gracious counsel He makes us fit for His gifts and works” (*Commentary on Romans* by Martin Luther, translated by J. Theodore Mueller, published by Kregel Publications, 1993).

Our work is God’s carefully selected gift. While He already knows what will happen with those gifts, He engages us to work towards God-pleasing results! And God’s will will prevail – with us doing it – or sometimes undoing it. We are free to work hard for Him, thoroughly enjoy the labor, and not be held captive by fear of failure.

We can’t fail! God won’t let it happen.

So let’s get on with it! Let’s meet, er ... eat, drink, and make the most of our time together.

Praise to You, Lord Christ! We are God’s gift to each other. We are God’s gift to God’s gift—the Church.

Pray. What can we say but thank You, dear God, for making us what we are and for Your holy guidance toward an excellent future. Amen.

Written by Ed Grube

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***To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20)***