Musing from the Pantry

The sending hymn for October 7 is "The Spirit sends us forth to serve." That's always been one of my favorites, for the melody as much as for the text.

But I was struck with the words of the first verse as I prepared for Sunday's worship:

…we go in Jesus' name,
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

Did you notice that as it slipped by? To bring ***glad tidings***. Not just to help with physical or economic needs, but to bring glad tidings, tidings of joy.

It's hard sometimes, I think, to keep that command in mind as we work, to remember that our interactions, our communications with those we serve need to go beyond helping meet their needs, being courteous. That's good stuff, no question – but Dufner's hymn reminds us that we are also bringing glad tidings, joyous tidings.

How do we do this? In part, of course, it's our attitude. We greet people with a smile, we're friendly, we're courteous. But it's also, I think, in our knowing and communicating that God doesn't want people to be poor, that God's kingdom is a kingdom where everyone has enough, and more than enough.

What we do at the Pantry is not charity as Scrooge saw it – the begrudging hand-out of some small sum to help "those" people. What we do at the Pantry is *caritas*, the root word of charity – *love*. We proclaim God's love, we share God's love, we live God's love, so that *all* people can know and experience God's love. And God's love is indeed joy, and the sharing of God's love is glad tidings indeed.

Let our prayer as we look over our shopping lists, or check our schedules for Pantry hosting shifts, or whatever it is we do to serve, be this:

> *Loving God, wondrous God of joy and gladness, may our hands and lips and minds and hearts be full of the good news of your love, so that all that we do and say proclaim your love and the glad tidings of your world to everyone we meet. Let all God's creation say yes!*