

December 3, 2011

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Contact Dr. Frantz on the web at www.mlcchurch.com

The joys of a generous spirit. Would it change your life in a good way if you were to win the lottery? *How big a jackpot*, you might ask? *How about \$11 million?* Would that be a good thing for you and your family?

We talk casually all the time about winning the lottery. Over the years, jokingly, people say to me, *When I win the lottery, I'll pay off the church's mortgage or give half of it to the church for mission and evangelism.*

They're joking, of course; and, for sure, it's never happened. However, in a more serious vein, I would wager that most people think an \$11 million lottery win would, in a heartbeat, solve all of their problems. Do we believe that?

On the one hand, who among us is going to turn down a winning \$11 million lottery ticket? On the other hand, do we really think our deepest problems in life—all our anxieties, worries and fears about the future, all of the personal challenges on our plate—can be solved with money?

My guess is there are a lot of people across America that think this, absolutely. At least, we'd sure like to give it a try.

This past summer, an older Canadian couple from Nova Scotia won \$11.3 million in the July lottery. Interestingly enough, they've already given almost all of it away.

While they were excited to have won the money, once the reality of their winnings settled in, it became more of a burden to them than a joy—until they began to give it away to a long list of worthy causes.

What this couple learned again and what we all know if we stop and take measure is that, with or without a lottery win, we have much to be thankful for. Why? Because, as the Nova Scotia couple said about their millions: *the money is not that big a deal. What really matters is that we have each other.*

Thanksgiving and the mystery of our human situation. These are bizarre times in the history of our nation, with the ever-widening political divide and so many changes and unfoldings all about. In many ways, we seem to be wandering spiritually as a nation—uncertain where to turn, where to place our trust and how to navigate the globalization trends of the new century.

Despite being the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, still, amidst our economic woes and massive shift in demographics, anxiety and fear abound. In a word,

our souls are unsettled. Our wandering begs for an experience of healing and renewal. And the starting point for healing is a profound, internal sense of thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is itself rooted in *grace*—in the free gift of a loving and compassionate God whose abundance—everyday—pours over us. A truly thankful heart helps put our lives in perspective.

Moreover, our thanksgiving is a condition of the spirit. It is a disposition we feel about life. It is also an attitude. To a great extent, however, we choose our attitudes. In this sense, our attitudes are choices we make everyday. Any day, any moment, we can choose to embody an attitude of humility and gratitude in our living, or an attitude of arrogance and entitlement.

A thankful heart is good for the spirit. It makes us better—more compassionate, more caring human beings. So, wherever you are in your life journey, give thanks!

However you think you are doing in your life, whether you are doing better or worse, whatever it is, give thanks!

Whatever your relative abundance or poverty, whatever your fortune or misfortune, give thanks!

Whatever is going on with those whom you love most in life and those who love you most, give thanks!

Whatever the hopes and dreams in your spirit or the lamentations and regrets in your heart, give thanks.

Whatever your belief or unbelief in the foundations of your life, give thanks.

For our thanksgiving is our response to the mystery and wonder of our human situation. It renews our spirit as it warms our heart.