

Sermon Notes - 3rd September 2017 – Christian Stewardship



- Sermon about stewardship – the way in which through our giving or our time, our talents and our money we enable the mission of the local church
- Here at St Anne's we are embarking on the next phase of our mission – *2020 Vision – A Mission Worth Living* as the way in which we will equip ourselves to be God's faithful people here in Kew.
- Stewardship sermons are often only heard of in terms of the Vicar asking people to increase their giving, but this stewardship sermon applies not only to what we give financially to the church, but equally how much we give of our time and talents towards our mission and ministry.
- Non-churchgoers, as well as some who do attend, are often surprised to hear that there is no Government or external support for churches. In other words all that we do here at St Anne's is done by your generosity of giving financially, giving of your talents and gifts, and giving of your time.
- Without your giving this church would not function – so thank you for what you do give to God through the church.
- However the reality is that whilst some people who attend do give in a realistic way statistically the majority of those who attend St Anne's do not.
- So I thought that it would be helpful to think about what you need to hear or to know to enable you to give generously?
- The Bible has many models and stories of giving that may help us to reflect on what each of us gives.
 - In the Old Testament we are taught to tithe our income (Lev.27:30, Num 18.26)– a tithe is 10% of your net income, that is 10% of what gets credited to your bank account each month. Some churches teach tithing. Our own diocese of Southwark teaches that we should give 4% of our net income in a tax efficient way to the Church, and the other 5% to charities of our choice. ***How does this measure up to what you give?***
 - Jesus uses the parable of the Widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4) to make the point that it is not a question of the monetary

amount that you give, but whether or not your giving is sacrificial. ***Do you give away what you won't miss, or do you give in a sacrificial way?***

- St Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 9:7) where among other things he is dealing with the lack of giving in the early church comes up with the lovely phrase, *'Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver.'*
Do you give willingly and joyfully, or do you resent giving?
- The idea of Harvest, and especially Lammas, the giving back of the first fruits, puts us back in touch with our dependence on God. Sometimes we use the offertory prayer – *'all things come from you and of your own do we give you'*. When we give we are only giving back to God what God has given us.
- Ash Wednesday also reminds us of our mortality when the priest ashes us he says, *"Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return – turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ"* – as the old wives tale says, *"Shrouds have no pockets"* ***How do you think about your possessions – are they yours or are you just a steward of what you have?***
- Then on a more positive note Jesus teaches us in many of his parables the importance of bearing the fruit of faith – the parable of the sower (Mt.13:1-23) , the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) spring to mind, as equally Our Lord's warning (Mt. 7:21) , *"Not everyone who cries Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven – but only the one who does the will of my Father..."* – Fruits are both personal and corporate – the vision of this church is that it will continue to develop and bear the fruits of the Kingdom.
- And again St Paul uses the image of the church as the Body of Christ to demonstrate our interdependence. To thrive and be healthy each one of us has a part to play – we can't leave it to others – the responsibility is ours. ***Are you taking your share of this responsibility?***
- Over the next few weeks you will be hearing much about our *2020 Vision – a mission worth living*. The wonderful truth is that if each one of us embraces the concept of realistic giving of our time, our talents and our money then the life of this church will flourish.
- St Francis said, *'It is in giving that we receive'* – be generous then as God is generous.