

A few words from the Vicar

For many years I worked in financial services as an audit manager and I used to look forward to this time of year. Why? Well, this was when we normally received our bonuses and when our annual pay rise (if we were getting one) came through.



Don't get me wrong, I worked for Co-op Insurance so the bonus and the pay rise we received was nothing like the eye watering amounts we see awarded in the City of London. Nonetheless, my bonus was better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick and, naturally, I never refused it!

Now you might think that the Church and Christians like me ought to be disinterested in money; that we ought to be otherworldly when it comes to such things. After all, isn't money the root of all evil?

Well no, the Bible doesn't actually say that. What the Bible says is that '*... the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.*' (1 Timothy 6:10) So, it's not money itself that's the problem but our attitude towards it, how we go about acquiring it and, indeed, how we spend it.

The fact is, for some people, money and the things it buys are their gods whereas, as Christians we know that the LORD alone is worthy of our worship. So, there is no problem if people work hard and get on in life just so long as they keep their success in its proper perspective.

As for me, since becoming a Christian, I've never really been motivated by a need to earn lots of money – and believe me, right now I could be earning considerably more than my stipend by contracting in the City of London – but I'm not embarrassed by money either. The fact is, without money, the mission of the Church would grind to a halt.

Indeed, I could tell you that, unless the income of this Church increases, we will end this year with a deficit of at least £3k (and that's without taking into account the cost of some the jobs we need to do). Our fuel bill has gone up too! But I'm not going to bang on about that. Neither am I going to bang on about the structural work that we will need to carry out on the building in the coming years. Nor am I going to exhort you to increase your regular giving, take out a standing order or regular giving envelopes and fill out a Gift Aid form (if you haven't already) – but, of course, if you did any of these things, it would be welcome!

But to look at giving from the perspective that the Church is short of dosh so please therefore give us some of yours is actually to view it from the wrong perspective. That's why I've no intention of twisting arms or putting a guilt trip on people about what is rightly a sensitive issue; an issue that's between them and God and nothing at all to do with me.

So, what is the right perspective? Well, sometimes in Church we say this prayer:

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you.

This reminds us that God is the source of all that we have and when we give (whether it is to Church or a Christian charity) we are giving back to God some of what is his anyway. Furthermore, when we give, it ought to be cheerfully in response to God's overwhelming love for us. St Paul puts this better than I ever could:

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

So, be of good cheer!

Every Blessing

Dave