

STEWARDSHIP MONTH OCTOBER 2017

Week 3, Sunday 15 October

‘The Blessing of Giving’ (I)

Professor Paul Walters

TEXT: 2 Cor 9: 8

“ And it is in God’s power to provide you with all good gifts in abundance, so that, with every need always met to the full, you may have something to spare for every good cause.”

Deut 26: 11: “be grateful for the good things that the Lord has given you and your family; and let the Levites and the foreigners who live among you join in the celebration...

2 Corinthians 9: 6 -15: This is the key text in so many ways. The collection Paul is writing about is for the church-leaders/founders in Jerusalem who faced almost overwhelming hostility - almost a kind of spiritual and economic siege. Macedonia was the Roman province that stretched around the northern edges of the Aegean Sea; Corinth was part of Greece – the Western borders of the Aegean. Both had been sites of successful ministry for Paul, but in this appeal for the Christians in Jerusalem, Paul was feeling his way towards something of the **interdependence** of individual churches/parishes we know today in the organisation of the world-wide Anglican church and ACSA here in South Africa, where the whole worldwide “body” is sustained by the principle of giving beyond selfish needs, beyond parish or even Diocesan boundaries for the ministry of Christ’s body, the Church.

Jerusalem for all kinds of reasons was THE founding church – the site of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that followed at that first Pentecost. No parent church in Jerusalem, no daughter churches anywhere else – and can you let a parent starve? In all this, the great example is Our Lord Jesus Christ who set aside the “glory he had with the father before the world began” in order to become a human being (that’s his poverty) in order to show us what God is like and so to assist us to become more like Him – not the least in generosity.

The English Romantic poet, William Blake, wrote in 1789

My mother taught me underneath a tree,

And pointing to the east, began to say:

“Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love

We are meant to become more and more like God – giving our “light” and “heat” AWAY – without any thought of return.

Paul therefore encourages the Corinthians to give generously and cheerfully in the certain hope that God is able to give us more than we need, “so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause’ (2 Cor 9: 8).

‘The Blessing of Giving’ (II)

Mr Ronaldo Burger

In an ordinary year, the cathedral has four sources of income: (1) Pledged giving – 43%; (2) Rental from St George’s Chambers (41%) and (3) the plate collection - 8%; (4) fundraising – 8%. However, in the past 15 months, we have experienced an outpouring of loving generosity both from donors who are still alive and donors who have died - well over **R300 000**, most of which the givers stipulated should be used for restoration or essential maintenance. That is nearly a third of our annual budget! - in gifts over and above pledged income.

The special blessing of this abundance has been that we have been able to keep out of debt as parish in a year (to date) in which our pledged giving and our plate collections have fallen below our budget – something we Church Wardens have addressed you about on more than one occasion. At the most recent PCC, however, taking stock at the end of the third quarter, we realised that, serious as the accumulated shortfall is at R94 000, if you turn the figures around as a percentage of our total budget that shortfall is less than 10% - so we together have achieved **90%** of our budgeted income – a major achievement in these financially tough times. For this we are deeply grateful.

On the **Expenditure** side, where does the money go? Our three major expenses are Clergy Staff costs (25%), our Diocesan Assessment (23%) and our Lay staff (non-clergy) costs (21%). None of our other costs exceed 10%: operating costs 7%, St George’s Chambers 6%, Repairs and maintenance 5%, Donations 4%, Office and Admin 4% Worship and Ministry 3% and telephone and IT 3%. In all these running and operating costs, we continually strive for every possible economy. To mention a few of the projects that we have completed this year and/or are currently busy with:

1. The South windows are being restored as we speak – they started last Monday;
2. The windows of the Lady Chapel were restored not so long ago – that you are aware of;
3. We have attended to roof leaks in the Deanery, Sub-Deanery, St Georges Chambers and the Hall;
4. We are currently repainting the walls and ceiling of the hall; We also replaced the tiles in the hall’s toilets;
5. Water tanks have recently been installed at the Deanery and the Sub-Deanery – you are all aware of the water situation in our town and the rest of the Eastern Cape;
6. We removed the fig tree on the steeple of the Cathedral;
7. The organ and other musical instruments require inspection and repairs from time to time;
8. The Deanery and Sub-Deanery also required some maintenance – tiles, gutters, painting and a broken garage door were attended to;

A good deal of the 23% we pay to the Diocese in our assessment comes straight back to us in the form of clergy stipends and allowances, but a good deal of it, too, goes to support the work of the Diocese in ministering to those areas which are impoverished to support clergy of their own. As the mother church of Grahamstown Diocese, it is our privilege to be one of the top **THREE** contributors to the work of the Diocese, and in this way, your generosity overflows in blessings not only our local

poor, but also to areas of need throughout the Diocese. In this way YOUR generosity helps to equip the Anglican church in this Diocese for the work of ministry.

Everything we have comes from God, the question can be asked “Lord, what do you want me to do with the money you have entrusted to me? How can I use it to be a blessing to others? God gives so much to us.....this world we live in, this building, our homes and offices, this community, our jobs, our families and friends and so much more to mention that we can be so grateful for.

We need to give as well and not just be happy with receiving all the time. Giving of our talents, our time, ourselves and obviously also by giving financially we can bless others.

Our giving is to bless God and to bless others.

For instance, giving to support our grocery basket is one way to bless others that are less fortunate in our parish/community. The grocery basket is a gift from all of us to those needy families in our community/parish.

Giving of our time, like visiting the sick, or helping at the Fair, or assisting at fundraisers, washing the Lay ministers' gowns, cleaning the chalices after each service, giving tea/coffee and eats for each service. Assisting with handyman duties around the Cathedral or the other buildings if you are a person gifted with those kind of skills. Musical talents that can be used by joining the choir or assisting with the piano etc at services. These are all ways in which one can give. The Cathedral is in need of many hands to make the workload lighter for the few who are being called upon all the time. Feel free to contact any clergy member, churchwarden or the Parish office in order to offer your assistance. Remember you are ultimately giving back to God, blessing God and in so doing blessing others.

Giving financially to the Cathedral, to God's work and ministry is just as important. As I have mentioned earlier, the Cathedral has a lot of financial commitments and your giving is so needed for these. We have mainly three options of giving financially, through the plate collection at every service, pledged giving and by considering to make the Cathedral part of your will.

The more committed way of giving is by way of pledged giving or tithing. The custom of giving a tenth part of one's profit or income. A tithe is a one-tenth part of something...

Malachi 3 verse 10 reads as follows: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me this way”, says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. As Christians striving to live in obedience to God's Word, we acknowledge that **one tenth** of what we have (a tithe) is due to God. (Malachi 3: 6 -10) For those who have never tithed before, this may be a scary demand, and 10% may seem much more than we can “spare”. So start small, but commit to giving a **definite percentage** of your income each month to God's work in this place. As God blesses that faithfulness (and he WILL) so you will be led to increase that percentage up to the full 10% over time.

At the back of the church and in our pew leaflets we have the dedication or pledge forms. Please indicate on the dedication response form **how** and **when** you intend to give this amount. (This helps the Parish Council to budget for the year ahead.) Recognise that you are **free** to reduce or even cancel this amount at any time, should your circumstances change.

As Clergy and Churchwardens who have accepted the discipline of tithing, we invite you to join us in experiencing the countless blessings that flow back to the generous giver through loving obedience to the source of all perfect gifts.