

Generosity Encouraged - 2 Cor 8 - April 2018 - Charlie Boyle

Our giving should be planned, proportionate and prayerfully done.

Context

Before we start let me just give some context to this letter written by Paul to the Corinthian church in Greece. Paul knew the church between the period of 50 and 57 A.D. had made a few visits but at times the relationship was strained and most recently he'd been subject to a hurtful attack. It is into this context that we are looking at his argument about how to encourage generosity in giving.

How do you react when you begin to hear someone preach about giving?

Do you walk out and leave

Do you fall asleep

Does it upset you..?

I can tell you it is not the easiest of subjects to preach on!

I ought to just say at the outset apologies for those who are visitors, you just happened to have come along on a Sunday when we look at our annual giving.

Paul is, like me, was walking on egg shells, as talking about giving is never easy, particularly for us English folk. His overall purpose is to make sure that by the time he arrives in Corinth the church will have put aside the full amount of money they are going to contribute to the impoverished Jerusalem church. That is like the **wish list SEE SLIDE** that I talked about last Sunday and at the beginning of the service. We don't want to run before, we can walk. Ideally we want have the finances in place for the projects we want to get done, like Paul did, before we start them.

Now bear in mind the context Paul is talking here to mostly relatively wealthy Christians, who live by the seaside, not unlike us, but he's had a tricky relationship with them and yet he wants them to share in a great project he has in hand. The project is demonstrating to other churches that they are part of the same family of God. He is desperately concerned about the unity of the whole Christian family and perhaps a bit like us, he is challenging them to reach out to other churches less fortunate than us. He is initiating a healthy competition between the two churches, encouraging each to strive to outdo the others in acts of kindness and generosity. By way of illustration for example the 8am average collection each Sunday, excluding festivals is £68, for 9:30am it is £350 and 11am £250. Now it would be great to not have any collections, it would make things a lot simpler and easier if everyone gave more generously by direct debit.

On Saturday our daughter Church, St Aldheim's had their vision day, in part to address their deficit, which is almost twice the size of ours. Wouldn't it be great to have some funds to bless them in their time of financial need? After all the original Victorian founders of this Church helped set it up.

As I said last Sunday when presenting the Annual Report, our regular giving by standing order is at the lowest level it has been in the last 3 years, down to 81,000..

See slide...

Last year we lost to glory some significant regular givers, one person gave £700 per month. Yet due to our increased congregational size we have been asked to contribute more to the Parish share this year, it is over £103K. If one individual was to pay this that seems a lot but when divided amongst the 313 on the electoral roll, which equates to £332 per year or £ 27 each per month. Many of us can afford to give much more. Of course we need to get rid of the current deficit of £9.2 thousand which to be honest I am not really worried about it. Why? Because I know that there is some money in the bank, and plenty in our own congregation and assets. It just requires each one of us to play our part to address it. I am doing my bit by putting in £500 to address the deficit and support the pledge for projects. I know that in part that is due to HSBC rejecting the standing orders. I also know that this is a generous congregation, people have given sacrificially and willingly in the past. I have every confidence that each of us can play our part in the future.

So how much should we give?

We give in a planned, proportionate and prayerful way. That is why I would encourage you to give by the new direct debit scheme, Parish Giving Scheme. In proportion to your ability to pay. If over 300 people gave £50 a month, we could get rid of collections all together...

I was always taught you should give 10%, which for me equates to £245 / month. Why do I tell you this...to inspire you to also give generously and sacrificially? I've always found that I've had more than enough money to spare. Not for my wants but plenty enough for my needs....

You can't out give God.

As Paul says here in this passage, we give in an abundant way for the "[privilege of sharing in this service to the saints](#)"

Why 10% because that is biblical, we tithe and we always give first to the Lord, to the Church. Then we give on top of that to our favourite charities...

We give freely, cheerfully not reluctantly or out of compulsion... We all have free will to decide.. That's what makes us do good or bad things. I can't force you to give, I can explain and exhort you to but the final decision, as it was for Paul and the Macedonians is with you.

As Paul said I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Christ became poor, remember that our aim as Christians is to be Christ-like, and for and perhaps some of you this is particularly hard, particularly countercultural to give. We are called to rich deeds of compassion and generosity on a daily basis. If you remember back to Jesus's birth he was given gold, frankincense and myrrh. But what did he and his family do with it, I'm sure he gave it away. Jesus became poor by living for the poor and living a life of simplicity. It is hard for us as rich Western Christians to identify and emulate Jesus, but by giving more away, we can start that journey, of being Christ-like and working towards our final destiny. We should give sacrificially and generously.

Why give?

We give to fulfil the vision of this Church, showing Christ's love to the world

We give because we believe in the cause, of proclaiming Christ on earth.

We give because it's part of our Christian duty

We give out of God's grace to us

as Paul says in verse seven [excel in this grace of giving](#)

What are we giving for?

Well for me that's the exciting part in that there are lots of different projects that you can support. [See slide](#)

[we can give to... see slide..](#)

Each one needs funding and I hope you find something here that excites you, that encourages you to give. We are all different and what one person finds important another may not...

Or you can just put it into the general pot, which of course pays for less tangible but nonetheless important things like heating, lighting and insurance as well as existing

salaries. People often say to me, this Church is so warm and welcoming, it's because we can afford to put the heating on!

But as you will see from the wish list Emma Blaney, who is currently paid £160 a month as an intern and does an average 40 hours a week, £1/hour. She could really do with being blessed by our support during had time moorland theological training college. She is paying the college fees herself but wouldn't be great to bless her, as her placement Church, which she will be helping at for the next couple of years?

How much should you give?

As I said earlier it should be in proportion to your income and outgoings.

You know 1 pound a week unless you're on £10 a week is not really very generous.

By way of example. I came across my old 1983 coin collection. See slide Did you know that the first £1 coin was introduced in 1983 apparently by sold this collection get £19 on eBay. But in today's money that 1 pound coin which has recently been replaced with a more tamperproof model adjusted for inflation is now only worth 32p. I remember as a child encouraged by my grandmother to give the pound in the collection, it was an expensive trip to church for her as she had to give each of their grandchildren a pound...!

I want to pay tribute to those who have given generously in the past and looked after this building and the people in it, with care and love. We also want to set up a good, firm foundation for the future on which to build. That's why we want to plan our giving for the future.

Now of course you can say well I see going skiing every year, which I do, I love skiing. Skiing is also shorthand for some, for spending the kids inheritance but I am spending it on them. Is that the need of course not it is a want. Like being a member of a sailing club, golf club or any other club for that matter...

But I do so, conscience free, knowing that back home the bills, the Church wages are taken care of and my share of them has been given, in advance, in a planned, proportionate and prayerful way. I encourage you to do the same..

So the challenge for each one of us is

- if we are giving regularly can we give a bit more?
- if we are giving regularly can we encourage one another or perhaps someone hasn't started giving do so. People here and in my life have inspired me to be generous, who can you inspire or challenge to be generous?
- if we have not started giving can we begin?

- There is a new parish giving scheme set up by the diocese to give regularly by direct debit

Emma has produced a **pledge card**, which we would love you all to think about, pray about and commit to signing if possible today, putting it in the basket as you come up the holy Communion or the 9:30 service as you leave.

As John Wesley said,

*'Earn all you can.
Save all you can.
Give all you can.'*

You and I are saved because God believed in grace giving. He gave his only Son Jesus to save us from our sins. You can trust God for heaven BUT can you trust him with your chequebook/bank account?

How much do we believe in grace giving? If we do believe in Him we should automatically give generously,

It is like gardening, which I have been doing a fair bit of recently with the boys...

...For whoever sows generously will reap generously...

PRAYER:

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES US TO BE GENEROUS, DELIBERATE AND CHEERFUL IN OUR GIVING NOT ONLY OF OUR TREASURE BUT ALSO OUR TIME AND TALENTS TO BUILD YOUR KINGDOM AND MAKE JESUS KNOWN HERE ALL SAINTS and ELSEWHERE...Amen