



christ church
moreton

LOVE TO GIVE

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Summer 2011

The diary for this term looks like this:

Wednesday 4th May

PRAYER MEETING

Week beginning 9th May

Home-Group – Love to Give 1

Week beginning 16th May

Home Group – Love to Give 2

Week beginning 23rd May

Home Group – Love to Give 3

Wednesday 1st June

PRAYER MEETING

Week beginning 6th June

Home Group – Love to Give 4

Week beginning 13th June

Home Group

Week beginning 20th June

Home Group

Week beginning 27th June

Home Group

Wednesday 6th July

PRAYER MEETING

Week beginning 11th July

Home Group

Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

John 8:31-32

Being disciples affects every area of our lives. And being disciples involves being obedient in every area of our lives. For the next 4 home-groups we are looking at one particular area – what we do with our money, and how we give our money.

There is a story told about some of the Vikings who were converted during the 7th & 8th centuries. As they were baptized, some kept their right arms above the water. In effect they were saying 'I commit myself to God – except for my sword arm. I am keeping that under my own control.'

While Christians in the 21st century don't need to keep their sword arm above the waters of baptism, there are many who metaphorically hold their wallets above the water. Martin Luther once said, "There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, the mind and the purse." Sometimes being faithful with our money is one of the biggest challenges we face.

1. WHO DO YOU SERVE?

WELCOME

What one thing are you most thankful to God for?

WORSHIP

1 Chronicles 29:10-13 reminds us that everything we have is a gift to us from God. Use these words together, then take time to thank God for all the good things he has given you.

WORD

Years ago when I was working in research, I had the frustrating experience of trying to work for 2 different bosses at the same time. I had been seconded part time from one department to work on a new project in a different department. The problem was that neither of my bosses understood the concept of 'part time'! They both wanted their work done, and they both expected their work to have priority.

I'm sure that I'm not the only person to have had that experience. And if you have ever been in that position, you'll understand very well what Jesus meant when he said, *No-one can serve two masters*. It just doesn't work.

Read Matthew 6:19-24

In verse 24 the word translated 'Money' is literally 'Mammon' – the god of material wealth.

- *Why is it impossible to serve God and Mammon?*
- *I suspect that few if any Christians would think that they 'serve Money' But in what ways might we be tempted to do just that?*
- *When it comes to you day to day spending, or your bigger expenses (new car / holiday etc.) do you think much about how God wants you to use your money?*

Read Luke 12:13-21

- *Why did Jesus tell the parable?*
- *The main character in the parable would most likely have been a regular worshipper in the synagogue – virtually everyone in Jesus time was. He was blessed with material possessions. How does he respond to this situation?*
- *What was the result of this?*

- *What mistake had the man made?*

The society in which we live could certainly be characterised as being one which stores up wealth for themselves, but is not rich towards God.

- *How can we avoid falling into that trap?*

Read Matthew 19:16-26

It is a well known story – recorded in Matthew, Mark & Luke's gospels.

- *Do you think that Jesus' instruction to the rich man applies to us as well?*
- *Why do you think the man found it impossible to give away his wealth?*
- *Why is it so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God?*
- *When it comes to the crunch, what would you find it easier to rely on for your security – money, or God?*

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-19

We read the first part of this earlier, but now we see David's response. He had collected gifts for building the temple, and now he acknowledges that what the people had given ultimately belonged to the Lord anyway.

- *Do you find it easy to think of your material possessions actually belonging to God?*
- *How does the way we use our money show our integrity (v.17) and our loyalty to the Lord (v.18)?*

WORK

In the coming week, ask yourself in regard to the actual amount you give through Christ Church to resource God's work and mission, 'What does it say about where my heart is? Who am I serving?'

2. GOD'S RICHES AT CHRIST'S EXPENSE

WELCOME

What is the most unexpected present you have ever been given?

WORSHIP

Philippians 2:5-11 is a wonderful hymn to the Lord who gave himself for us. Use it together to praise him.

WORD

'Grace' is a word which we use often in church – we might sing 'Amazing grace' or 'Only by grace', we might pray using the words of 'The Grace' (The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.)

But what does 'grace' mean? It is something given as a gift, as opposed to being earned. And that is just what God does for us. We are saved by grace – we can't earn it. But actually everything we have comes from God's grace. The Bible makes it clear that everything – all the earth, everyone in it, all their possessions and all their money – belongs to God. God has been overwhelmingly gracious to us.

Read Luke 17:11-19

God's grace was shown to all 10 of the men. The 9 who didn't come back probably thought that they had good reasons for not doing so – after all Jesus had told them to go and show themselves to the priests.

- *Why do you think that Jesus said to the one who came back 'your faith has made you well', when all 10 had already been healed?*

- *How should our giving be related to our appreciation of what God has done for us?*

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

In verses 1-3 Paul describes our state before we became Christians. What 3 words might you use to sum up what he said?

- a) (v.1)
- b) (v.2)
- c) (v.3)

- *Do you find it easy to accept this as a description of yourself before becoming a Christian?*

- *Or of your non-Christian friends now?*

- *In verses 4-10, in contrast to the desperate fallen condition of human beings, what three things has God done for us?*

- *What motivated God to do all this for us?*

- *What response does Paul expect from those who have experienced this great salvation?*

Good works (v.10), of course means much more than giving, but it does include this.

Read Luke 19:1-10

It is one of Jesus' most famous encounters. Zacchaeus, as a chief tax collector, would have been very wealthy. As a chief tax-collector, he would also have been doing an extremely unpopular job just for the money he could get out of it.

- *Why do you think he wanted to watch Jesus from a distance?*

- *Why did the crowd object to Jesus visiting Zacchaeus?*

- *What change did meeting Jesus bring about in Zacchaeus?*

- *What was significant about it?*

- *Since becoming a Christian, has your attitude to money changed?*

3. RESPONDING TO GOD

Read Luke 21:1-4

- *Assuming that Jesus doesn't expect all of us to give all of our wealth to the church, what is important about what the woman did? Why do you think that Jesus drew attention to her?*

- *What are we supposed to learn from her example?*

WORK

Take some time to list all of the things you have to thank God for. Then ask him to help you to respond to him with the same generosity he has shown to you.

WELCOME

What is the best complement you have ever been paid?

WORSHIP

Psalm 145 tells us many great truths about our God, and also encourages us to respond to his goodness. Use the psalm together.

WORD

I guess that all of us would acknowledge that giving is part of our discipleship. And all of us would recognise that we have to give to Christ Church if the church is to continue running.

But I'm sure that all of us have to juggle our income and our expenditure. Whether you are a pensioner on a limited income, or a parent with children to provide for, or as younger person with a hefty mortgage, or a breadwinner facing job insecurity as the recession continues to bite, the challenge is there. And we live in a society where so many thing which even a generation ago would have been considered luxuries are now considered necessities. Given all that, making a faithful and responsible decision about our giving is a big challenge.

But we don't have to make those decisions unaided. The Bible has a lot to say about money and possessions. Around a third of Jesus'

parables and a sixth of all his teaching have to do with our attitudes to money and possessions. Getting our thinking straight on this has obviously been a challenge to disciples from the beginning!

Read Matthew 23:23-24

- *What does Jesus condemn the Pharisees for?*

- *What should they have done?*

The 'tenth' that Jesus talks about refers back to the tithe in the Old Testament law. Leviticus 27:30 says: *A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.*

Read Malachi 1:6-18

- *What does God accuse the priests who were presenting the sacrifices for the people of doing? (v.6)*

- *How are they doing this?*

- *What is God's response?*

- *What does this tell us about our giving?*

Read Malachi 3:6-12

The Lord calls on his people to return to him.

- *What shows that they have turned away from the Lord?*

- *How can they show that they are returning to him?*

- *Why were the people reluctant to give their tithe? (v.14)*

The tithe provided for the ministry of the temple. Today, as God's New Testament people we still have the responsibility of maintaining the mission of his church, which will obviously include our giving to the church.

- *How would you sum up the mission of Christ Church?*

- *How important is it to you?*

- *Does your giving reflect how you feel about the mission of the church here in Moreton?*

Let's return to Matthew 23:23-24. Jesus says that the Pharisees should have tithed, but also to have practiced justice, mercy and faithfulness. It seems to me that Jesus was saying that his people need to go beyond tithing.

There is a danger of becoming legalistic about tithing, and of thinking that if we give a tenth, we can do what we like with the

other 90%! But as those who have seen the grace of God shown supremely in giving us his Son, surely our response will come from love for him, and a desire to give him all that we can.

WORK

The challenges we face as a church at present are considerable. Already we have had to cut back our expenditure, and we face the prospect of further cutbacks in the next 12 months. We are unable to afford some of the things we would like to have or to do.

Yet giving isn't primarily about keeping the church going. It is primarily about faithfulness to the Lord, about responding to his generosity to us – it is a matter of discipleship. If we are obedient disciples, then Christ Church will be fully resourced for the mission we have. If we are not obedient, we will never fulfil that mission anyway.

Over the next week, ask God to help you to be obedient, not just in giving, but in every area of your life.

4. THE PRIVILEGE OF GIVING

WELCOME

What one luxury item would you find it hardest to do without?

WORSHIP

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ his Son.
And now let the weak say 'I am strong',
let the poor say 'I am rich',
because of what the Lord has done for me.

WORD

Life for most people in New Testament times was hard. Although a few were very wealthy, many had a hand to mouth existence – it has been estimated that maybe a half of the people in the Roman Empire started each day with nothing, and only ate if they worked that day.

They would have had ample excuse for making sure that they could provide for their own needs. Yet in one particularly poor area – Macedonia – far from doing that, the Christians collected money for their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, who were facing famine. Paul used them as an example of joyful giving.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

- *What did the Macedonian Christians' generosity spring from?*
- *How much did they give? (v.3)*
- *How did they see their giving? (v.4)*
- *Paul was writing to the church in Corinth. There were many ways in which it was a good church – but what was its weakness? (v.7)*

What does Paul give as the main motivation for giving?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-14

- *What do you think Paul means in verse 6?*
- *Is it realistic to think that our giving can be both sacrificial and cheerful?*
- *What is the connection between having all that you need, and abounding in every good work? (v.8)*
- *Paul links together their obedience and their confession of the gospel. How does our obedience prove our confession?*

- *What should we do if we are finding obedience difficult?*

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

- *What is the significance of the money for the collection being set aside on the first day of the week?*

In these passages Paul encourages the Christians in Corinth to give thoughtfully, prayerfully, sacrificially, and proportionately. These are still good guidelines for us today. Our giving should be:

- **OBEDIENT** – to God's word
- **REGULAR** – weekly or monthly
- **BUDGETTED** – not a bit from what is left over
- **PROPORTIONATE** – a thought about, prayed about proportion of what we have.
- **RESPONSIVE** – as a response to all that God has given to us.
- **CHEERFUL!**

WORK

Paul referred to 'the grace of giving.' Our natural human reaction will always be to look to our own needs first, and then to give what we think we can afford. If we are to give in the way the Bible talks about, we will need God's grace to be at work in us. Only he can give us the desire to give more than we think we can afford. So pray that the Lord will give you that 'grace of giving' so that you will be able to give generously and cheerfully.

CHRIST CHURCH, MORETON

We want to be a **W**elcoming Church

Because Jesus welcomed all who came to him

an **E**vangelsing Church

*Because we believe that everyone has the right to hear the
Good News of Jesus*

a **L**oving Church

*Because Jesus commanded his followers to love one
another*

a **L**earning Church

*Because we are in the business of making disciples, and
disciples must always be learners*