

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY 2022

“Lord Jesus, who looks at the heart of the giver, inspire us to be ready to give our all”. Amen.

Every day we see generosity in our churches and Christian communities, reflecting the generous God we believe in. Generosity is at the heart of our faith. We believe in a generous God and our own generosity is a testament and hall- mark of our faith in action.

As you leave today, you will be given a little hand-out to encourage you to review your annual giving and even suggesting, that it will not be so very far away when we can become a ‘cashless’ Church – as so many others already are. I want to say on your behalf a very big thank you to our Treasurers in both our churches, Phil Poole and Will Self, and also here, to Michael Holland, who looks after our planned giving as well as preparing our annual accounts so meticulously. They are always available to speak to anyone, confidentially, in the same way that in those lovely old days, you may recall, when you could actually meet up with and speak with your local bank manager!

But however much we may miss the banking of the past or be frustrated with the soulless banks of today; however much we groan inwardly when the government lectures us on ‘growth, growth, and more growth’ – in the same way as our Diocese seems to do – let’s just step back to reflect more deeply on how we might so easily turn around the financial gloom of both church and country.

Generosity and thankfulness go hand-in-glove for people of faith which is why the parable of the widow's mite is neither sentimental nor anecdotal. It is the opposite of political or religious arrogance. It speaks of loyalty, constancy, prayerfulness and most of all, being faithful.

The ever widening gap between rich and poor is ugly to watch and uglier to experience. If you are working for the Royal Mail or the Railways, if you are in the care sector barely receiving more than a minimum wage, if you stack shelves in a supermarket, or if you are setting out to buy your first home, the challenges seem insurmountable. I realise that we are not living in a Christian society any longer but surely we need to promote a fairer and more just one. And surely we need to lead by example?

In order to pay for our clergy and their pensions and their housing, and in order to care for our expensive and historic buildings; in order to develop our ongoing charitable work and outreach and social care...we will always need financial backing and support. And most of all we need our commitment to turn things around and become a generous and giving community, sharing one another's resources and resourcefulness, sharing one another's burdens, and sharing the joy of united, faithful service.

Let's hear again the words of our Lord observing the rich people's offerings: "They all contributed out of their abundance; but the poor widow out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."

So my personal thanks to you for being good stewards of the Gospel, converting what we hear - with how we continue to live and serve our Lord Jesus practically, boldly in this place, in the years ahead. We need to pray to be generous in all things, including the conversion of our pockets! Like the saints before us we must continue to give, and not to count the cost. So how we care for the needs of both Church and neighbour today, is a life and death matter for tomorrow, and by the grace of God, we will travel together hopefully with a new resolve.

In the name of...

AMEN.