

St. Philip's Anglican Church — Sunday 21 October 2007

Rev'd Rob Lamerton

Readings:

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Psalms 119:97-104

2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

Luke 18:1-14

Today we have our third and concluding address about our stewardship with a particular focus on our giving to God's Mission and particularly to our Giving to God's Mission here at St Philip's.

We began two weeks ago with me asking us to think about:

- How we will approach the ministry needs of St Philip's into the future (and to think about faith resources and human resources and practical financial resources).
- As we do this how we will pay for what we do.
- **OR** If we should look at a radical change to the way we operate as a parish.

I mentioned two aspects of ministry.

- The possibility of employing someone to organize, resource and teach in our children's ministry.
- The concern to find funds for the future operation of the Northbourne Community Centre Monday Programme.

They were essentially all questions about our faith and how we relate to God who is faithful.

The gospel story today **concludes** with Jesus asking his disciples:

"And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

It is the ending to his words about persistence in prayer and suggests that **faith is the outcome** of a persistent life of

prayer!

So I want to say that ALL we do must be prayed about with God. You notice I do not say "prayed for" but "prayed **about**" and don't say "**to** God" but "**with** God"!

Prayer is about turning things over with God. Struggling with God in conversation and listening! (Today is the Day of Prayer for Burma, so in the midst of pondering our life as a parish we are reminded of far bigger issues.)

Jesus told the parable about the need of the disciples "to pray always and NOT lose heart."

As an example he used the story of a widow who approached a judge who had no respect for God
OR
People!

BUT eventually he grants justice because of the woman's

PERSISTENCE!

Jesus is saying "If the unjust judge will grant justice, **HOW MUCH MORE QUICKLY AND READILY** will the God of Justice, Love, Mercy and Peace?"

If in the story a couple of weeks back, Jesus said faith is about willingness to act, in today's story, faith is about prayer.

The stories are not at odds with one another, they simply describe different aspects of faith.

In our gospel story, Jesus speaks of **persistence in prayer!**

Jeremiah, in recognizing that after war and destruction there will be a new covenant and better times, speaks of persistent hope!

Paul (?) in his letter to Timothy speaks of **persistence in a whole lot of things:**

- **faith**

- **study of scripture**
- **good works**
- **persistence in favourable AND unfavourable times. convincing, rebuking, encouraging**
- **persist even when tempted to abandon the truth.**
- **persist in carrying out your ministry etc...**

This theme of PERSISTENCE must of course flow on to our stewardship — our management of ALL we have.

Stewardship is NOT a particularly Christian term but we find Jesus often talking about households, managers, stewards. Generally, the words translate the Greek word *oikonomos* from which we get our word *economy*. (Now we will hear that word a lot in the weeks to come! Homework could be to see how many times it is used in the debate between Mr Howard and Mr Rudd tonight!)

I am reminded that our stewardship is about our wisdom in the management of **ALL that God gives!**
It is NOT just about what we give to the Church or to God's mission here — it applies to ALL of our lives!

How we:

- **use water**
- **organize our household, plan time, organize holidays, time for rest, work, play, etc, etc.**
- **buy what we buy**
- **maintain and care for our home**
- **how often we drive our car and the petrol we use**
- **how much TV we watch**
- **how we spend or save our money**
- **AND HOW MUCH WE GIVE AWAY!**

The part of this I want to face today is:

WHAT PART of this do I give to the Christian Ministry at St Philip's and I would like us to see fundraising as something different as over and above our giving.

So I am asking us today to focus on our Giving! So listen today because it will be another year before I talk about it again!

I want us to use today's word PERSISTENCE when talking about giving — be committed, decisive.

I also want to emphasize the second "P" word — PLANNING.

organize a plan — don't leave it to chance.

And then there is the third "P" word — PROPORTIONAL.

Some people use the tithe method — a tenth. I am not sure that an exact tenth is the way, but working on a certain proportion of one's income is best!

To help us understand the principles I offer three stories:

Busy grandmother, regular church goer...
Last minute...
Leaving home
Grab some change for the plate...

Principle? Giving what is left over — small change

Was it persistent/planned/proportional? NO!

Wealthy businessman, attends occasionally, wife regular worshipper.
Looks at budget
asks: How many on giving list?
so, what is my share?
Divide budget by number of givers...
 $\$50,000 / 50$ (long time ago) = $\$1,000$
He was giving to a budget.

BUT

His earnings would have been $\$100,000$ p.a.

A tithe (tenth) would have been \$10,000p.a.
Had he thought about it sacrificially he could have given
may more than \$1,000

Was there persistence? / planning? YES / proportional? NO

Anglican Priest. How *I* do it.

My fortnightly pay slip/
Just under one tenth of what I get paid after tax
and I have that paid through Anglican Direct to St Philip's.
I also calculate the value of the use of the Rectory and
about one tenth of that is what I give to God via World
Vision, Anglicare, Christmas Bowl, etc., etc. So my giving to
God's mission is not limited to St Philip's/

(Link here to Anglican Direct on the diocesan web site or
information (below) about doing an [Electronic Funds
Transfer to the St Philip's account.](#))

Persistent, Planned Proportional

In *your* calculations you will have other factors to consider.
In the end it is an understanding between yourself and God.
Not everyone can give in the same way! If incomes are
irregular it may be best to work out an average over a
period of months or a year to see what a week's earnings
might be. The giving can be calculated on that!

Remember St Paul's words: "God loves a cheerful giver"...
which really means a person happy and at peace about their
giving. If people are distressed and anxious about this then
I would say DON'T GIVE! ...but still please come to church,
be a part of a worshipping community and simply put
something on the plate for the loose collection.

In the same way as we expect members of the parish to be
good stewards, so too is the Parish Council. I would suggest
that the budget each year should provide for 10% to be
given away. I have heard of parishes working this up to
50%!!! OR we can agree to give away all fundraising of
something similar.

The Parish budget really tells about our priorities; Our Vision! It should also express our faith and have components of growth and outreach. It is the same principle that as we are generous, generosity grows. God's generosity is always total and complete as identified in creation and in Christ on the cross.

So today I encourage you to re-think your commitment to God's mission at St Philip's.

Through:

Persistent
Planned
Proportional giving.

And may our persistence in Prayer guide all that we do!

If you wish to give to St Philips by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) but do not wish to use the *Anglican Direct* system, an alternative is to use your Internet banking service.

To give to St Philip's via Internet banking the details are:

Account Name: **Anglican Development Fund**

BSB Number: **032-719 (Westpac)**

Account Number: **325697**

Reference/description: **2512 - St Philip's O'Connor**

The above details MUST be used; otherwise the money will not be identified as being for St Philip's.

Please be aware that EFT transactions may incur fees;
Please refer to your financial institution.