

## **In God we Trust**

Rev Murray Wills – Stewardship Sunday

8am and 10am Services at St James' Church

26 August 2018

Readings: **2 Corinthians 8:7-15 Matthew 6:19-24**

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen

### ***[Hand out US dollar bills]***

For the moment I just want you to hold the dollar and reflect on the fact that on the back of the bill it has the words of the official United States motto - "In God we Trust" – Why do you think that is?

The readings today talk about stewardship. In the Anglican church we tend to shy away from such talk, because it inevitably needs to mention money. This is to the detriment I think of ourselves as we grow in faith with God and to the detriment of the development of God's kingdom.

So, what is the background to stewardship and why is it important not just for the continuation of God's work but for us personally?

### **What is a steward?**

Steward comes from the Greek word "*oikos*" which means house. Stewardship is taking care of household matters. A related word is "*oikonomics*" from which we get the word economics. Another related word is "*oicology*" from which we get the word ecology. Taking care of the earth that God has entrusted to us.

A steward is someone who manages the property, finances or household of another, someone who is not an owner, but a manager – just like us.

As Christians we believe that everything we are, and everything we have is a gift from God, and that we will use our resources to participate in the restoration of the world through the building of God's kingdom. We are God's trustee', and we live out our baptismal promises through our stewardship of the gifts of God. **In God we Trust.**

Some of the things that we are called to be stewards of are:

- Creation
- Our personal and work relationships

- Our health
- Our treasure (money)
- Our Spiritual Gifts and talents
- The Word
- The Mission and ministry of the parish

As it is Stewardship Sunday, we need to talk about our treasure:

Jesus talks more about money – both its ability to get in the way of our relationship with God and its ability to be a great blessing when we hold it loosely and give it away freely – than he does about any other two or three issues combined.

*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

While the church definitely needs your contribution it doesn't need it as much as you need to give some of it away – abundantly, freely, lovingly. **In God we Trust**

Giving back to God a portion of what God has given to us – is critical to spiritual health. Give freely, bountifully to God's work through the work of our parish and we will reap bountifully.

**In God we Trust**

Part of being a good steward of our time, our talent, and our money is believing that investing in God's kingdom isn't a waste. 1st Cor, 15:58 says:

*"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."*

Many of us belong to other organisations, the golf club, the Gym, professional organisations (In my case like the Institute of IT Professionals, The Institute of Management Consultants, and Institute of Directors) and we fully understand that these organization have costs and willingly pay our membership fees each year in return for services.

The Church also has costs but we are not like any other secular organization. From a monetary perspective all the money that this parish receives is from parishioners, and we rely on the guidance given in the bible around its provision. It is likely to be only those that attend St James' and All Saints' who will contribute to our funds.

Our ministry and mission are solely reliant on funding from the parish, from giving, fundraising like book fairs, car park rental, hall hireage etc. Contrary to some belief, there is no money given to us by the Diocese.

## **We need funds to run the parish**

- Pay the salary of the staff and vicar
- Photocopier expenses
- Telephone and Power
- Maintenance for this building, the hall, All Saints, the vicarage
- Special projects within the church building
- Youth activities

## **externally in our many important outreach ministries.**

- Waffles
- Chirping Cherubs
- Missions

Time and talents are also things that we are encouraged to give freely. Time and talent-wise there are many ministries that we are involved in, examples are:

Lay Ministers and pastoral carers taking services in rest homes, and people's homes.  
Visiting the sick and dying. The Music group, The choir, Sunday school, sound, cleaning and so on.

Here are some facts and figures which illustrate our own financial position:

It costs \$7,000 per week to keep the doors of the parish open and offer the current services we do (All Saints' and St James')

Pledged Giving makes a contribution to expenses of 45%

Pledged Giving therefore pays the wages but is not contributing to the other running costs of the parish – this means we are reliant on tenuous and variable income to pay for all we provide and no funding to do anything else.

The Breakdown of income is as follows:

<b>Income</b>	
Pledged Giving	44.9%
Donations	16.1%
Carpark Rental	8.3%
Interest Income	7.4%
Fundraising	4.9%
Chilton	4.4%
Hall Income	3.6%
Bequests	3.3%
Cash	3.0%
Grants General	1.4%

All Saints Donations	0.8%
Funeral Income	0.8%
All Saints' Cash	0.5%
Wedding Income	0.3%
Church Hire	0.2%

Two thirds of the Pledged Givers give less than \$19 per week.

Karori Parish, which is roughly the same numbers has three times the income from pledged giving.

The parable in Matthew 25: 14-30 teaches us that bringing our finances under Christ's Lordship is one of the most basic ingredients for having his kingdom rule and authority established in our lives.

Malachi 6:10 says "Bring the full tithes into my house". By my house this meant his temple or church.

Our Gospel reading today implores us "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21

One of the dreaded words that Anglicans don't like to use in New Zealand is the word **Tithe**. A tithe is the giving back to God 10% of what God has given to us. In the old testament, the people gave 10% of their food and grain as an offering to God. This was part of Jewish life.

It was used to further his kingdom.

Tithing is a form of proportionate giving.

Proportionate giving, in which one starts by pledging a percentage of one's income and increasing that percentage in subsequent years makes it easy to be a cheerful giver. We might begin at 2%, 5% and see how God blesses you as you build up to 10%.

Christian giving should be done in accordance with our means (2 Cor 8:12; 1 Cor 16:2), that is why it is a percentage. It is an essential part of our life as disciples of Jesus (Matthew 6:2).

As a family we decided some years ago to move to automatic payment, as well as giving for special projects and ministries. This has been very helpful to us as we have got used to funds regularly being transferred to the parish each month. We also sit down once a year and prayerfully consider whether we increase the automatic payment in line with our income.

We also prayerfully consider what time involvement we will have in various ministries each year, and what study we will do to equip ourselves for this.

We are told that the liberality of God's blessings to us is connected to the liberality of our Christian giving ("Now this I say, the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" 2 Cor 9:6; see also Matthew 6:4).

I believe that through this process God has blessed our family. Not only has God blessed our business and various ministries but also our deepening in relationship with his church (and by church I mean the people) and with him. We experience joy in giving, and giving willingly (2 Cor 9:7).

God will provide for your needs, abundantly. **In God we Trust**

We have some exciting possibilities. The Spirit is really moving in our midst and now is the time to back God's plan for us with joyful giving. If we want to get to the stage that we fund another Associate Priest like Jean, or invest further in work with youth and families this will be our reality, joyful giving.

I thank you for what you have done, what you are doing and what you will do in the future.

Shortly we will bless today's pledges or tithes, and our weekly offering to God. In this we include all of the automatic payments that are given.

In this Stewardship period and at all times I ask you to prayerfully consider the amount you are giving and its use in furthering God's work here on earth.

A slightly modified version of our offertory prayer sums up our teaching today.

Blessed are you, God of all creation;

through **your goodness** we have gifts to share.

**Accept and use our offerings for your glory**

**and for the service of your kingdom.**

Blessed be God for ever.

**In God we Trust**

Amen