
Saint Andrew's Anglican Church

October 18, 2009

Dear Friends,

Let me be the first to state what I should hope is really quite obvious: St. Andrews exists today, by the grace of God, in large part owing to the willingness of Christians to give sacrificially of their time (much time having been spent in prayer and planning), talent (serving Christ and one another) and treasure (giving with generosity). Let us each pray fervently that these sacrifices will be blessed by God, for His glory (*not ours*), His purposes (*not ours*) and for the good of many souls (*even ours!*).

Let us reflect briefly on the following passage from Mark's gospel:

And he (Jesus) sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44)

Our generosity to the church is based upon God's generosity to us. He has not only given us life and all the material things which support life (and for many of us, numerous luxuries beyond that), but He has also offered us a place with Him in heaven. And this at the cost of His only Son's crucifixion. We shall never be able to match His generosity to us. Our abiding gratitude for His generosity should, however, shape our decisions about giving to this mission. In the passage above, Jesus makes a point of praising the poor widow who places her two copper coins into the Temple treasury. Though this was an insignificant sum in relation to the Temple budget, it was an enormous and sacrificial gift for her. Jesus tells us that she gave "all she had to live on." This is the gift of a woman who had been touched by God's generosity and love (even before Christ's passion), which led her to make such a sacrificial offering. Jesus praises her, even though her gift is inconsequential in terms of the Temple's needs. And because He commends her, we should seek to imitate her – aspiring to a Christ-like mind when it comes to giving.

Practically speaking, our giving should be both *sacramental* and *sacrificial*. By sacramental, I mean that our giving to the church should be a substantial symbol of the whole. We already owe God everything that we have and everything that we are. We can never give Him enough. By giving a percentage of what comes in we may find it easier to remember that everything is from God and properly belongs to Him. By recalling that the percentage that we give is taken from what *He* has given us, we may give with gratitude for His many blessings.

Likewise, when we give to the work of the church, we are making a tangible sign of our faith and trust in God. Through the act of giving we are proclaiming that we trust God to provide for us and to protect us. We are resisting the temptation to trust in riches or to insist upon obtaining every creaturely comfort. We are making manifest that our hope and inheritance is in heaven.

Giving to the church is also an act of submission, as we submit to God (who has told us, for instance, that it is more blessed to give than to receive) and to His chosen means of accomplishing His mission on earth, the work and witness of the Church.

Our giving should also be sacrificial: it should be great enough to make a difference to us in how we live. Some people can afford to give 10% without any real impact on their lives. As Christians, however, such people should probably give more. As with prayer and fasting, almsgiving entails sacrifice. Each of these disciplines (self denial/fasting, prayer and almsgiving) is necessary for a fruitful and healthy Christian life. We need to give for our soul's health, just as we need to pray.

I encourage you to take some time (perhaps a week or more) to pray about your pledge to our mission church this year. Ask God to direct you and then listen for the guidance of His Holy Spirit. If you should like to speak with me (or a member of the Council of Advice) about giving or about St. Andrews, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Please return your pledge cards by All Saints Day (Sunday, November 1st). For your generosity to this new mission church, you have my thanks – and that of your fellow parishioners.

In Christ,
