



The Gift

The image that comes to mind when we think of a gift is probably of a parcel, carefully wrapped to conceal its contents, and given out of friendship or affection to mark a special occasion, such as a birthday or Christmas. There will often be an element of reciprocity in an exchange of presents, or a gift may be given in recognition of some special service that the donor wishes to recognise.

One aspect of St Paul's work that we tend to overlook is the great effort he took in organising one particular gift. It was sufficiently important for him to devote two chapters of his second letter to the Corinthians on the subject. This was a gift that came without fancy wrapping but express deep feelings of brotherly concern for a group who was suffering during a period of famine.

Paul and Barnabas had already taken a gift from the Christians at Antioch to the elders in Jerusalem when they first heard of hardship among the Judean Christians. Paul had a specific reason for this generosity. In the past there had been friction between the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem and Gentile Christians elsewhere. By exhorting the Greek Christians to help their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem in their time of need, Paul was underlining the deep-seated bond that unites all Christians, transcending any minor differences. As he would frequently emphasise, Paul saw Christians as part of one body, the body of Christ.

Paul also gives more general reasons for giving which he sets out in three principles as he urges the Corinthians to be generous. These principles apply universally.

Firstly, Christian giving is a response to God's love. Paul reminds them of God's grace to them:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (v 9)

Secondly, giving should be done willingly. This is more important than the amount given.

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. (v12)

Thirdly, giving should be based on equality. Quoting from Exodus Ch 16, Paul writes:

The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. (v11)

To western Christians who have "gathered much" this is a direct challenge.

Are we equal to the challenge?

Silence, Prayer, And Communion Ending 9.30 a.m.

Silence

A time for thought...reflection...prayer

Praise

O Lord, open our lips

and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Blessed are you, creator of all,

to you be praise and glory for ever.

As your dawn renews the face of the earth

bringing light and life to all creation,

may we rejoice in this day you have made;

as we wake refreshed from the depths of sleep,

open our eyes to behold your presence

and strengthen our hands to do your will,

that the world may rejoice and give you praise.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;

let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,

so may the light of your presence, O God,

set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Psalm for today (Psalm 94:5-11)

³ How long, Lord, will the wicked,
how long will the wicked be jubilant?

⁴ **They pour out arrogant words;
all the evildoers are full of boasting.**

⁵ They crush your people, Lord;
they oppress your inheritance.

⁶ **They slay the widow and the foreigner;
they murder the fatherless.**

⁷ They say, "The Lord does not see;
the God of Jacob takes no notice."

⁸ **Take notice, you senseless ones among the people;
you fools, when will you become wise?**

⁹ Does he who fashioned the ear not hear?
Does he who formed the eye not see?

¹⁰ **Does he who disciplines nations not punish?**
Does he who teaches mankind lack knowledge?

¹¹ The Lord knows all human plans;
he knows that they are futile.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Prayer

A prayer of Mother Teresa

Lord take away my indifference and insensitivity to the plight of the poor.
When I meet you hungry thirsty or as a stranger
Show me how I can give you food, quench your thirst,
Or receive you in my home and in my heart.
Show me how I can serve you in the least of my brothers.

Lord in your mercy
hear our prayer

Loving Lord, hear our prayers for the have-nots of the world.
Grant justice
grant hope

We pray for those who have no homes
living as refugees or sleeping homeless on our streets.
Grant justice
grant hope

We pray for those in inadequate housing, the shacks and huts of shanty towns
or in bed and breakfast accommodation
because there is nowhere else for them to go.
Grant justice
grant hope

We pray for those who have no food, whose crops have failed
their economies burdened by debt, or their labours not fairly rewarded
Grant justice
grant hope

We pray for those who have no fresh water
daily facing the threat of disease and the nightmare of drought.
We pray also for those with scant resources, condemned to a life of poverty,
with no prospect of respite, no opportunity to help themselves.

We pray for those with no access to education, no health service
and no one to turn to for support
Grant justice

grant hope

Stir up all who enjoy plenty to respond to the needs of those who do not
Help us be ready to say no to ourselves so that we may say yes to them
To sacrifice a little so that they may receive much.

Grant justice

grant hope

The Diocesan Prayer for this week, said together:

Merciful God,

you have prepared for those who love you

such good things as pass our understanding:

pour into our hearts such love toward you

that we, loving you in all things and above all things,

may obtain your promises,

which exceed all that we can desire;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God,

we thank you that you have brought us safely to the beginning of this day.

Keep us from falling into sin or running into danger,

order us in all our doings and guide us to do always

what is righteous in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,

your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

Ending

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God

The next SPACE will be on Wednesday 15th July

The Collection for the Lord's People

¹ And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

¹⁰ And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹ Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵ as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 (a lectionary reading for today)