

Sermon for Stewardship Sunday at Holy Trinity Geneva on Sunday 19 October 2025, the 18th Sunday after Trinity

Texts: Deuteronomy 26.1-16; 2 Corinthians 9.6-15; Luke 18.1-8

Stewardship Sunday

In the Monty Python film 'Life of Brian' which is a surreal comedy, Brian who is accidentally mistaken for the Messiah, becomes caught up in an independence group, the "People's Front of Judea" who plan a revolt against the occupying Roman forces of the Roman Empire. As they scheme, their leader complains that the Romans have taken everything from them and asks the famous question, "What have the Romans ever done for us?"

For a moment there is a silence. Then a timid voice says, "aqueducts" and another "sanitation". Reg, the leader retorts, "OK I grant you aqueducts and sanitation, but apart from that, what have the Romans ever done for us?" Thick and fast, to Reg's great annoyance, comes suggestions from his followers, "roads, irrigation, education, medicine, wine, public baths, safety". Exasperated, their leader says, "Yes but *apart from* aqueducts, sanitation, roads, immigration, medicine, education, wine, public baths, safety, what have the Romans ever done for us". A quiet voice says, "Brought peace?" "Oh peace – shut up!" retorts Reg and they go onto to plan their revolt.

'Don't take it for granted' is a message we might take from this and it's a fitting one for us today when we celebrate our Stewardship Sunday. For very often that exactly what we do in our daily lives. For on a wet Monday morning as we shuffle reluctantly from home to school, work for appointments or to do the shopping, as we get caught up in Geneva traffic jams which make us late, or people ask us for money or directions, we can feel quite put upon. We may not exactly say, "What has God ever done for us?" but we are far from counting our blessings. And we resent the encroachments on our time.

Stewardship Sunday is a day when we are invited to recalibrate, that is, to see our lives and our relationships with God and with each other from a fresh perspective. And paradoxically, if we are willing to do this, it is extraordinarily liberating as we shall hopefully see.

So what does the Bible tell us about stewardship which would help and encourage us to recalibrate. The answer is "a lot" but I'm going to focus on the main points:

First, right in the very beginning, in the opening book of Genesis, we learn about God as Creator and the world which he has created. In whichever way we understand these two creation stories as recorded in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, the key message is that God is the very source of life itself, he has created us and all that exists, and he holds us in life. Therefore, our lives and everything we are and possess are a pure gift from God and are holy and precious in his sight.

Second, that through our sin, we denied this truth, tried to put ourselves as the centre of our lives and world and turned our backs to God. But God did not reject us

or leave us to live in hells of our own making. Instead, he has sent his only Son Jesus, to come into our world, to show us through his life, ministry death and resurrection, his unfailing love for us and all creation and through the cross to free us to live the life of God's kingdom, rooted on love of God, of each other and of all creation. In other words, God has done everything for us to turn our hearts of stone and selfishness to become hearts of flesh bringing with love.

And third, God calls us, as created, precious people who have been redeemed by him in Jesus, to live as good stewards of the world. What this means in practice is for us to reorientate (or recalibrate ourselves) so that we recognise we are created by God, that everyone we have comes from him and to respond by living our lives in gratitude and generosity.

So being good stewards or stewardship is not for Christians an optional bolt-on; something for us to consider, as an exceptional good deed for us to consider occasionally when life is running particularly smoothly. No, the Bible makes it very clear that stewardship lies or should lie at the very heart of our DNA as Christians. We have received freely from God and we in turn, should give freely and generously. What we are and what we have is not ours by right, but a gift from God, which we are called to hallow and to use generously and well.

What do we have to offer? The answer is our time, our talents and our resources. How we can offer then will vary at different times in our lives depending on our circumstances. Sometimes, we may be intensely busy with our work and earning well but have very little free time – in these times, we may wish to give more financially and recognise there is a limit to what we can volunteer to do. At other times, we can be very tied up and also have little money coming in, as for example, we're looking after children whilst on maternity or paternity leave. What we may be able to offer then is help and counselling to those in similar circumstances. Sometimes, we will have the blessing of some time to give and some more resources. And on retirement we may find we have less money, but we do have more time to offer, which will be a rich blessing as it will be rooted on our experience of our working lives.

Being good stewards and enabling this to become rooted in our Christian DNA comes from remembering what God has done for us. In our reading from Deuteronomy today, Moses tells the Israelites that when they finally reach the Promised Land, they must make regular offerings of the first fruits of their harvest and pay tithes. They should do this, firstly to remember that what they have belongs to God – they are offering to God what rightly belongs to him. Second to help those who were vulnerable in that land – the orphan, the widow and the stranger – that is, those who have no one to stand up for and protect them. And thirdly, they should do so to remember their vulnerability – they have been strangers and slaves in the land of Egypt – they should never forget that it is only through God's grace and mercy that they were freed from this. Therefore they should not blame those in need in their own land but rather think, "There by the grace of God, I might well have been".

At Holy Trinity, we have lots of opportunities to exercise our Christian stewardship and we rejoice in how many people are already doing this. Some of this is very

visible, as for example those who sing in our choir, welcome us to worship and lead worship and run our finances. But many others are more hidden, as for example those who help serve us tea and coffee after services, those who ensure the church is repaired, clean and safe, those who help run our tech team in church and online and all those who give financially, often sacrificially, to ensure that we can continue and develop the ministry of God's church here at Holy Trinity.

I have also been hugely encouraged and delighted over the past year to witness a number of new people, including our young people, who have come forward to offer their time and talents across so many areas of our church life. These include new people in our pastoral, worship planning and tech teams, those running and helping our groups with young people, flower arrangers, 'On the Way', serving coffee, our choir, community choir and Trinity Choristers and our new Social Outreach group.

To all of you I would like to say a very big thank you and on behalf of our Wardens, Aylwin and Ursula. Without you, we simply could not function as a church – through your generous, loving and creative support, we are able, with God's grace, to seek to carry out our vision and *raison d'être* as a church which is to seek to make God's love visible here in Geneva.

As we look ahead, I invite all of you to consider and pray where God is calling you to use your time, talents and resources in the year ahead. The harvest is great and although the labourers are not few, there are many areas in which we need urgently need leaders and helpers. This is both because some who have faithfully helped for years now need to step aside and also as we develop into new areas of ministry and service. So, to give you just a few examples, we need more people to help lead and support our work with children and youth; to support our pastoral work, to organise and run social and fundraising events including our forthcoming Christmas Fair.

We have a sheet available at the back of church called '*Ways to get involved at Holy Trinity*' – do take a copy and think what you might do. Ursula will also be speaking to us just before the notices about ways of giving including Pledge Scheme. We do also very much welcome suggestions of new areas of ministry and outreach for us to consider; for example, Susan Durston has put forward a suggestion for a Seniors group who could take part in a range of discussion and other activities (details at the back of church).

'What has God ever done for us?'. Close your eyes for a minute now and reflect what God has done for you. Think of those areas in which you have experienced his love, mercy and generosity in the past year. I'm going to give us a moment's silence so we can reflect *couple of minutes silence*.

Now think in what ways God may be calling you to be a good steward in the year ahead. What are the ways in which you are going to put this into practice. Again, I'm going to give us a couple of minutes' silence for this. *couple of minutes silence*.

'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!'

Amen

Canon Daphne Green