

Sunday theme – **Stewardship**

Read Philippians 4: 10-20

1. Verses 12 -13 are full of content. Real actual life story for many, and real challenges for the actual living of life.

1a. Are their members of the group who could share their account of times of plenty and times of need? This of course is not just financial plenty/need.

1b. Do we experience God more deeply in times of need or times of plenty? Can you explain this?

1c. How confident are you about God's love and provision for you as you look back over the ups and downs that is the life journey?

1d. For you, how difficult is it to say 'Amen' to verse 13?

2. There's a real sense throughout this passage that Paul has felt his ministry has developed 'in partnership' with the Philippian church as his church planting proceeded (see particularly verses 10, 14-16). Paul cares deeply for them and his ministry, and they reciprocate completely.

2a. Can we take this theme of partnership into our church and ministry today? Do you feel you are in partnership with the church leadership and ministry? Do you feel the church is in partnership with you? In what ways are these expressed and experienced?

2b. Thinking of God's abundant provision and our 'partnership' with Jesus in delivery of the gospel, as in the context of this passage, the challenge to us all is - what sort of partners are we. Had we been in partnership with Paul (as per the Philippians), what differences might there be when Paul wrote a letter to us?

Read Mark 12: 41-44

3. There is always a danger with this short passage, because it is using money to illustrate principles, that we take from it only monetary principles. For sure, it applies to money, but much more. There are two main principles, partnership with/relationship to Jesus principles, being illuminated here.

3a. We can probably all think of 'others' (especially not ourselves!) whose public statements and public actions are found not to match their private reality. True compassion and true generosity come from the heart, and is seen by Jesus (verse 41). What sort of actions do we need to take to avoid falling into this trap of seeking public recognition for 'our good deeds'?

3b. Generosity. Size is not the issue here, but proportion, and is very much at the heart of the principle. We can never be as generous (gracious) as God, who has given us everything, but he challenges us to be generous with all he has provided, and to trust him to continue providing for us. In what ways can we come to an understanding that our giving of worship and money and time and gifting and effort is correctly proportionate to our 'income' of all that God has given us?

(Bible used = NIV 2011 translation)

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