

# Holy Trinity Church : Formby

6<sup>th</sup> June 2010

8.45am Holy Communion 1 Kings 17 vs 17 - end  
Luke 7 vs 11 - 17

10.30am Holy Communion @ Redgate

## "Giving in Grace (1)"

### INTRODUCTION

Those of you who have read my letter in this month's Parish Magazine, will be aware that this month we are undertaking a '*Giving in Grace*' renewal programme.

Giving in Grace invites each one of us to consider, prayerfully and thoughtfully, how much we should give back to God; in thanksgiving for all that He has given us.

Can I, at the outset, say that I am not inviting you to do something that I don't do myself. Nor am I saying that you have to do exactly what I do.

What you give back to God is between you and God and nobody else - except perhaps your husband or wife.

In my magazine letter I state that Meg and I have, since the day we were married, tithed 10% of our income, after tax, both our earned income and any money that we have received as bequests from members of the family who have died and been kind enough to remember us in their will.

I am aware that some people say that it is easier for a Vicar because he doesn't have a mortgage to pay. I would far rather be paid more by the Church Commissioners and have to pay a mortgage, than, as we have, take out a mortgage at the age of 63 to purchase a house for our retirement!

Each one of us will have different financial demands upon us and these will change throughout our life.

Giving in Grace invites us to consider the principle first and then how we put that principle into practice.

It hasn't always been easy. Living on a curate's stipend with 3 children under the age of 4 and on Family Income Supplement and Free Milk was a challenging time. As indeed was having 3 children at University at the same time!

There may have been times when it would have been nice to hold back on our tithe, but we didn't, and throughout the 36 years of marriage we have never been overdrawn at the bank.

All I can say is that I believe God has been faithful to His promise to honour those who honour Him.

And our honouring of Him and our giving of a tithe comes simply as a thanksgiving for all that he has done for us.

As the verse from Psalm 126 piped in icing around our wedding cake stated

*"The Lord has done great things for us  
and we are glad"*

## TEACHING

I'm aware that this is beginning to sound like a sermon in praise of Keith Jones - if that's how its coming over, may a apologise.

This was never my intention - all that I have said so far is to underline the fact that what I am inviting you to consider is something that I too considered over 30 years when I met and married Meg - who was herself already fully committed to being generous to God in thanks for His generosity to her.....**NO I DON'T MEAN INTRODUCING HER TO ME!!**

Although in many ways we both believe that it was no coincidence that I should decide to train at Oxford rather than Salisbury and that a fellow student, who was a close friend married one of a group of girls who shared a house

in Oxford where they were working....and YES Meg was one of those girls.....

And - as they say - the rest is history,

**BUT** that's another story

Our two Bible Readings this morning give us two examples of the generosity of God.

In the Old Testament we heard part of the account of how Elijah is blessed by God and through that blessing Elijah is able to bring a blessing to a widow and her son.

Elijah's prophecy that there would be a drought had come true, but God had provided for Elijah by bringing him to a brook for water, whilst, at the same time, sending ravens to feed Elijah.

An example of God honouring our honouring of him.

Eventually the brook had dried up

God instructed Elijah to go to the town of Zarephath, where a widow would look after him.

- Elijah came to the town gate
- Met a widow
- Asked her for bread
- She told him she had no bread - just a little flour
- Elijah instructed her to go home and make some bread for her and her family and to bring him some

***"Your flour will not run out"***

Which is exactly what happened - neither the jar of flour NOR the jug of oil ran out for all the time of the drought

**BUT** - what did happen is what we heard this morning

- The son was taken ill
- Died
- Brought back to life through the intervention of Elijah

Another example of God honouring those who honour him.

Whilst in the N.T. we heard another account of God blessing a widow - by restoring back to life a son who has died - this time through the intervention of Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

Two examples of widows receiving God's greatest gift - their son returned to life.

One very privately

The other very publicly

In each case one cannot begin to imagine how grateful these two widows will have been.

We may not have received the gift of a dead son returned to life

**BUT** - we have all received an even greater gift than life itself - Eternal Life = the assurance that death is no longer

the end for those who have faith in God's Son, who destroyed death once and for all on the cross of Calvary.

**AND** - our thanksgiving should be just that = **THANKS - GIVING**

This is what motivates our giving to God and dare I be so bold as to suggest that the depth of that giving, will be in direct correlation to the depth of our thanks for all that God in Christ gives to us.

Imagine if the widow of Zarephath, had not trusted Elijah

She wouldn't have used up the last of her flour to make some bread

She wouldn't have been blessed with food whilst others were going hungry

She wouldn't have seen her dead son restored to her alive and well

She had to be ready to give the little she had - to be given  
all that God had in store for her.

As Frances Havergal's famous hymn '**Take my life**' says

*"Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee  
Take my silver and my gold  
Not a mite would I withhold  
Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store;  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all, for Thee"*

**Amen**