

***Waiapu Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Napier***  
***23<sup>rd</sup> June 23, 2013 - Stewardship Sunday - Luke 12:13 -21***

***Bishop John Bluck, Acting-Dean***

The job description they handed me when I arrived back here four months ago was pretty simple. Keep people talking to each other, make sure the organ gets a good launching, don't argue with the choir, or the flower guild, preach lots of sermons, don't make any major changes (though small ones are OK), don't spend any money and on one Sunday at least, ask for some more.

Well this is the Sunday and I'm not looking forward to it.  
I'd rather preach to Anglicans on believing in miracles than giving money.

Money, like sex, is not what we talk easily about in Anglican churches, even though we spend a fortune on building them, and even more to keep them standing.  
And why is that? Something about our Church of England heritage, where up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century at least they had lots of money. Up until the collapse of British agriculture, English clergy enjoyed generous livings, until they had to learn to live in genteel poverty.

Other churches don't have this coyness about cash.  
If you're a Mormon you pay up and give free missionary service overseas as well.  
Most Pentecostal churches tithe – 10% of what you earn thank you very much and no questions asked. And there are some small groups of fundamentalist Christians in New Zealand where you have to give everything you own in order to join, even your children's right to marry who they like.  
The thriving Pacific Island churches in this country pose the biggest challenge to our Anglican piety about money. They see giving as a very public, very competitive priority – you feed your church even before your family. Their fund raising invariably involves the choir. The women members dance and sing, wearing very little but flax and coconut oil, and you respond by sticking your notes to their bare skin. And a five dollar note would be an insult.

The cathedral music director didn't think that would be a good idea today, so we'll move right along and continue to mark this stewardship Sunday by talking about everything else but money.

Because it is a chance for us to take a pause and ask some wider questions about why we gather here Sunday by Sunday and sustain this massive building and this ambitious programme of ministry and hospitality, music and liturgy; all of this time honoured routine that many people out there value and take for granted but don't want to pay for.

Stewardship Sunday is as good time to take stock of what we're doing, in the same way that writer Fiona Farrell says the Christchurch earthquake forced people to stop and take stock of what they were doing with their lives, and having survived the quake, ask whether they wanted to simply keep on keeping on.

Let's not wait for an earthquake to do that. Let's use a day like this to review and re-adjust our priorities, not simply keeping on keeping on, but putting first things first.

Which brings us to the biblical readings. They leave us in no doubt about what comes first.

The Old Testament passage tells us to be faithful above everything else, to love God and honour his commandments – write them on your front door and bind them to your arm and your forehead.

If they had tattoos back then, we'd be told to do that.

And the epistle tells us to give thanks constantly, for everything, in all circumstances. It calls us to be the sort of grateful people that see life as a gift, every day as a blessing.

Name me a single thing you have and enjoy, to paraphrase St Paul, that you didn't first receive as a gift from someone around you or before, and ultimately from God.

The hymn we sang last Sunday says it beautifully:

*New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove..  
new mercies each returning day  
hover around us while we pray..*

and if we learn to live in a state of thankful expectancy, then we will find

*new treasures still of countless price,  
every hour of the day  
if on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find..*

The readings, like the hymn leave us in no doubt about the way we should see the world and lead our lives and order our priorities and hallow all we find.

But just in case there is any hesitation about any of that, the gospel spells it out with the subtlety of a sledge hammer in the hands of that big fellow in the Mitre Ten ads.

The parable is called, just in case we miss the point, The story of the Rich Fool.

He stores up all his treasures – ample goods laid up for many years and then, he relaxes, eats, drinks and is merry.

Which he's entitled to, after a life time of working and saving.

The story to this point could be a model for Kiwi Saver or a respectable superannuation scheme.

Any retirement village would love this fellow.

But the story turns nasty.

God calls this man to account, not for his saving but for not being rich toward God, which probably means he kept his treasures to himself and wasn't good at sharing them around.

In God's eyes, that makes the man, not a prudent investor, but a fool.

It's tough stuff. The judgement is not about the man's wealth, or his skill at investing wisely and saving carefully. It's about his unwillingness to share and be generous, his inability to see that everything he had he had been given.

One way of translating this story for our day is to ask how well we share what we have saved with others who need our support, and who haven't been given as much as we have.

That sharing is not only about money of course, it's as much about our time and energy and skills and compassion, even our patience and our prayers.

It's about our faithfulness and our generosity and our hospitality,  
our thanks giving as well as our cash giving.

The church we belong to doesn't define that sharing,  
but it certainly nurtures and encourages that sharing,  
centring and returning us to the love that comes new every morning, that our wakening and  
uprising prove.

The music and the liturgy, the bread we break, the friends we make, the peace we pass and  
receive, the physical space that helps us lift up our hearts, the words that sustain us here,  
we used to call them the comfortable words until the adjective was stolen by the soft  
furnishings industry,

all the blessings of being part of the body of Christ and the People of God called Anglican,  
all of that is part of the giving and receiving of holy things,  
the things through which we are able to be rich toward God.

And keeping those things together, and this cathedral show on the road, takes the money  
that I wasn't going to talk about today.

Justin, the new bishop of Wellington describes the church, in the western world at least, as  
walking in exodus times. We're heading out into the wilderness, he argues, and no one has  
the GPS setting for the promised land.

This cathedral is nowhere near as full as when my grandmother sat in the pews here. Some  
days you might wonder why people find it hard to walk through these doors.

Our job as faithful, thankful, expectant, generous people is hold this space open and keep it  
warm with our presence and our prayers and our music and the poetry of our liturgy so that  
others can discover anew, or rediscover again its power and grace.

It's not as though the people who stay away have all been here and checked us out and  
heard the words and music of the Christian story and the Anglican tradition and said to  
themselves, thanks but no thanks.

When our Cathedral Links committee invited local business people from the streets around  
the cathedral to come and visit and share a drink and meet us, 90% of them said they'd  
never been inside the building and knew little or nothing about what happened here.

Our public relations and marketing record is about as dismal as it gets. If we were selling  
toasters, the world would still be eating bread.

I don't know about being in the wilderness but we are certainly living through in-between  
times. The old negative images of a church of guilt and obligation, known more for what it's  
against than what it's for, still lurk. The church of hospitality and grace is still struggling to  
show its face.

But it's not all that bad either. The people who do come are here because they want to be  
here, not because it's fashionable or compulsory.

And if you look carefully at the faces of our Cathedral Kids or our choristers as they bounce  
around this place as though it belongs to them, you can't believe it's all going to end with old  
folks like me.

Our job is to keep this cathedral alive and well and welcoming so we can pass this inheritance on. And the great thing about being part of a cathedral like this is that the sheer scale and size and depth and breadth and beauty of that inheritance is obvious on every side. And the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us make their presence felt and surround us here.

One third of the people on our cathedral roll give regularly, according to their means which varies enormously. Those who can afford five dollars a week sit alongside those who can give \$100 a week. And nobody, not even the dean, knows who gives how much except a single trusted laywoman who is the offertory recorder. In this church you can be sure no one will try and tell you how much to give and what you can afford. That's the Anglican way. But they might ask you to consider giving regularly.

If we doubled the number who did that, our struggle to pay for ministry would be changed overnight. If we saw our church giving as our core spending rather than our discretionary dollars, the treasurer would get a good night's sleep again.

One of the great things I learnt about our cathedral story is that, unlike the first building, this one was built out of lots of small gifts from lots of people. We need to rediscover that sense of scale, and it will only happen if lots of people make this place their own.

The chances of that happening here, in this beautiful place, in the middle of a city, striking enough to catch the attention of all who pass by, endowed with a great organ and a rich tradition of words and music, are better than most other Anglican locations I know. And should new people look inside and receive welcome and acceptance and inspiration from the words and music offered here, well just imagine what might happen here. We could end up with a community of a size that does justice to the size of the building. We already know that can and does happen when we get it right with what we offer here.

In this cathedral and its resurrection story we have the seed for what the future urban church in Aotearoa might be. The seed is well rooted here. We have to keep it growing. That task is our privilege and our calling.

***Waiapu Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Napier***  
***23<sup>rd</sup> June 23, 2013 - Stewardship Sunday - Luke 12:13 -21***

***Bishop John Bluck, Acting-Dean***

The job description they handed me when I arrived back here four months ago was pretty simple. Keep people talking to each other, make sure the organ gets a good launching, don't argue with the choir, or the flower guild, preach lots of sermons, don't make any major changes (though small ones are OK), don't spend any money and on one Sunday at least, ask for some more.

Well this is the Sunday and I'm not looking forward to it.  
I'd rather preach to Anglicans on believing in miracles than giving money.

Money, like sex, is not what we talk easily about in Anglican churches, even though we spend a fortune on building them, and even more to keep them standing.  
And why is that? Something about our Church of England heritage, where up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century at least they had lots of money. Up until the collapse of British agriculture, English clergy enjoyed generous livings, until they had to learn to live in genteel poverty.

Other churches don't have this coyness about cash.  
If you're a Mormon you pay up and give free missionary service overseas as well.  
Most Pentecostal churches tithe – 10% of what you earn thank you very much and no questions asked. And there are some small groups of fundamentalist Christians in New Zealand where you have to give everything you own in order to join, even your children's right to marry who they like.  
The thriving Pacific Island churches in this country pose the biggest challenge to our Anglican piety about money. They see giving as a very public, very competitive priority – you feed your church even before your family. Their fund raising invariably involves the choir. The women members dance and sing, wearing very little but flax and coconut oil, and you respond by sticking your notes to their bare skin. And a five dollar note would be an insult.

The cathedral music director didn't think that would be a good idea today, so we'll move right along and continue to mark this stewardship Sunday by talking about everything else but money.

Because it is a chance for us to take a pause and ask some wider questions about why we gather here Sunday by Sunday and sustain this massive building and this ambitious programme of ministry and hospitality, music and liturgy; all of this time honoured routine that many people out there value and take for granted but don't want to pay for.

Stewardship Sunday is as good time to take stock of what we're doing, in the same way that writer Fiona Farrell says the Christchurch earthquake forced people to stop and take stock of what they were doing with their lives, and having survived the quake, ask whether they wanted to simply keep on keeping on.

Let's not wait for an earthquake to do that. Let's use a day like this to review and re-adjust our priorities, not simply keeping on keeping on, but putting first things first.

Which brings us to the biblical readings. They leave us in no doubt about what comes first.

The Old Testament passage tells us to be faithful above everything else, to love God and honour his commandments – write them on your front door and bind them to your arm and your forehead.

If they had tattoos back then, we'd be told to do that.

And the epistle tells us to give thanks constantly, for everything, in all circumstances. It calls us to be the sort of grateful people that see life as a gift, every day as a blessing.

Name me a single thing you have and enjoy, to paraphrase St Paul, that you didn't first receive as a gift from someone around you or before, and ultimately from God.

The hymn we sang last Sunday says it beautifully:

*New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove..  
new mercies each returning day  
hover around us while we pray..*

and if we learn to live in a state of thankful expectancy, then we will find

*new treasures still of countless price,  
every hour of the day  
if on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find..*

The readings, like the hymn leave us in no doubt about the way we should see the world and lead our lives and order our priorities and hallow all we find.

But just in case there is any hesitation about any of that, the gospel spells it out with the subtlety of a sledge hammer in the hands of that big fellow in the Mitre Ten ads.

The parable is called, just in case we miss the point, The story of the Rich Fool.

He stores up all his treasures – ample goods laid up for many years and then, he relaxes, eats, drinks and is merry.

Which he's entitled to, after a life time of working and saving.

The story to this point could be a model for Kiwi Saver or a respectable superannuation scheme.

Any retirement village would love this fellow.

But the story turns nasty.

God calls this man to account, not for his saving but for not being rich toward God, which probably means he kept his treasures to himself and wasn't good at sharing them around.

In God's eyes, that makes the man, not a prudent investor, but a fool.

It's tough stuff. The judgement is not about the man's wealth, or his skill at investing wisely and saving carefully. It's about his unwillingness to share and be generous, his inability to see that everything he had he had been given.

One way of translating this story for our day is to ask how well we share what we have saved with others who need our support, and who haven't been given as much as we have.

That sharing is not only about money of course, it's as much about our time and energy and skills and compassion, even our patience and our prayers.

It's about our faithfulness and our generosity and our hospitality,  
our thanks giving as well as our cash giving.

The church we belong to doesn't define that sharing,  
but it certainly nurtures and encourages that sharing,  
centring and returning us to the love that comes new every morning, that our wakening and  
uprising prove.

The music and the liturgy, the bread we break, the friends we make, the peace we pass and  
receive, the physical space that helps us lift up our hearts, the words that sustain us here,  
we used to call them the comfortable words until the adjective was stolen by the soft  
furnishings industry,

all the blessings of being part of the body of Christ and the People of God called Anglican,  
all of that is part of the giving and receiving of holy things,  
the things through which we are able to be rich toward God.

And keeping those things together, and this cathedral show on the road, takes the money  
that I wasn't going to talk about today.

Justin, the new bishop of Wellington describes the church, in the western world at least, as  
walking in exodus times. We're heading out into the wilderness, he argues, and no one has  
the GPS setting for the promised land.

This cathedral is nowhere near as full as when my grandmother sat in the pews here. Some  
days you might wonder why people find it hard to walk through these doors.

Our job as faithful, thankful, expectant, generous people is hold this space open and keep it  
warm with our presence and our prayers and our music and the poetry of our liturgy so that  
others can discover anew, or rediscover again its power and grace.

It's not as though the people who stay away have all been here and checked us out and  
heard the words and music of the Christian story and the Anglican tradition and said to  
themselves, thanks but no thanks.

When our Cathedral Links committee invited local business people from the streets around  
the cathedral to come and visit and share a drink and meet us, 90% of them said they'd  
never been inside the building and knew little or nothing about what happened here.

Our public relations and marketing record is about as dismal as it gets. If we were selling  
toasters, the world would still be eating bread.

I don't know about being in the wilderness but we are certainly living through in-between  
times. The old negative images of a church of guilt and obligation, known more for what it's  
against than what it's for, still lurk. The church of hospitality and grace is still struggling to  
show its face.

But it's not all that bad either. The people who do come are here because they want to be  
here, not because it's fashionable or compulsory.

And if you look carefully at the faces of our Cathedral Kids or our choristers as they bounce  
around this place as though it belongs to them, you can't believe it's all going to end with old  
folks like me.

Our job is to keep this cathedral alive and well and welcoming so we can pass this inheritance on. And the great thing about being part of a cathedral like this is that the sheer scale and size and depth and breadth and beauty of that inheritance is obvious on every side. And the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us make their presence felt and surround us here.

One third of the people on our cathedral roll give regularly, according to their means which varies enormously. Those who can afford five dollars a week sit alongside those who can give \$100 a week. And nobody, not even the dean, knows who gives how much except a single trusted laywoman who is the offertory recorder. In this church you can be sure no one will try and tell you how much to give and what you can afford. That's the Anglican way. But they might ask you to consider giving regularly.

If we doubled the number who did that, our struggle to pay for ministry would be changed overnight. If we saw our church giving as our core spending rather than our discretionary dollars, the treasurer would get a good night's sleep again.

One of the great things I learnt about our cathedral story is that, unlike the first building, this one was built out of lots of small gifts from lots of people. We need to rediscover that sense of scale, and it will only happen if lots of people make this place their own.

The chances of that happening here, in this beautiful place, in the middle of a city, striking enough to catch the attention of all who pass by, endowed with a great organ and a rich tradition of words and music, are better than most other Anglican locations I know. And should new people look inside and receive welcome and acceptance and inspiration from the words and music offered here, well just imagine what might happen here. We could end up with a community of a size that does justice to the size of the building. We already know that can and does happen when we get it right with what we offer here.

In this cathedral and its resurrection story we have the seed for what the future urban church in Aotearoa might be. The seed is well rooted here. We have to keep it growing. That task is our privilege and our calling.

***Waiapu Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Napier***  
***23<sup>rd</sup> June 23, 2013 - Stewardship Sunday - Luke 12:13 -21***

***Bishop John Bluck, Acting-Dean***

The job description they handed me when I arrived back here four months ago was pretty simple. Keep people talking to each other, make sure the organ gets a good launching, don't argue with the choir, or the flower guild, preach lots of sermons, don't make any major changes (though small ones are OK), don't spend any money and on one Sunday at least, ask for some more.

Well this is the Sunday and I'm not looking forward to it.  
I'd rather preach to Anglicans on believing in miracles than giving money.

Money, like sex, is not what we talk easily about in Anglican churches, even though we spend a fortune on building them, and even more to keep them standing.  
And why is that? Something about our Church of England heritage, where up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century at least they had lots of money. Up until the collapse of British agriculture, English clergy enjoyed generous livings, until they had to learn to live in genteel poverty.

Other churches don't have this coyness about cash.  
If you're a Mormon you pay up and give free missionary service overseas as well.  
Most Pentecostal churches tithe – 10% of what you earn thank you very much and no questions asked. And there are some small groups of fundamentalist Christians in New Zealand where you have to give everything you own in order to join, even your children's right to marry who they like.  
The thriving Pacific Island churches in this country pose the biggest challenge to our Anglican piety about money. They see giving as a very public, very competitive priority – you feed your church even before your family. Their fund raising invariably involves the choir. The women members dance and sing, wearing very little but flax and coconut oil, and you respond by sticking your notes to their bare skin. And a five dollar note would be an insult.

The cathedral music director didn't think that would be a good idea today, so we'll move right along and continue to mark this stewardship Sunday by talking about everything else but money.

Because it is a chance for us to take a pause and ask some wider questions about why we gather here Sunday by Sunday and sustain this massive building and this ambitious programme of ministry and hospitality, music and liturgy; all of this time honoured routine that many people out there value and take for granted but don't want to pay for.

Stewardship Sunday is as good time to take stock of what we're doing, in the same way that writer Fiona Farrell says the Christchurch earthquake forced people to stop and take stock of what they were doing with their lives, and having survived the quake, ask whether they wanted to simply keep on keeping on.

Let's not wait for an earthquake to do that. Let's use a day like this to review and re-adjust our priorities, not simply keeping on keeping on, but putting first things first.

Which brings us to the biblical readings. They leave us in no doubt about what comes first.

The Old Testament passage tells us to be faithful above everything else, to love God and honour his commandments – write them on your front door and bind them to your arm and your forehead.

If they had tattoos back then, we'd be told to do that.

And the epistle tells us to give thanks constantly, for everything, in all circumstances. It calls us to be the sort of grateful people that see life as a gift, every day as a blessing.

Name me a single thing you have and enjoy, to paraphrase St Paul, that you didn't first receive as a gift from someone around you or before, and ultimately from God.

The hymn we sang last Sunday says it beautifully:

*New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove..  
new mercies each returning day  
hover around us while we pray..*

and if we learn to live in a state of thankful expectancy, then we will find

*new treasures still of countless price,  
every hour of the day  
if on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find..*

The readings, like the hymn leave us in no doubt about the way we should see the world and lead our lives and order our priorities and hallow all we find.

But just in case there is any hesitation about any of that, the gospel spells it out with the subtlety of a sledge hammer in the hands of that big fellow in the Mitre Ten ads.

The parable is called, just in case we miss the point, The story of the Rich Fool.

He stores up all his treasures – ample goods laid up for many years and then, he relaxes, eats, drinks and is merry.

Which he's entitled to, after a life time of working and saving.

The story to this point could be a model for Kiwi Saver or a respectable superannuation scheme.

Any retirement village would love this fellow.

But the story turns nasty.

God calls this man to account, not for his saving but for not being rich toward God, which probably means he kept his treasures to himself and wasn't good at sharing them around.

In God's eyes, that makes the man, not a prudent investor, but a fool.

It's tough stuff. The judgement is not about the man's wealth, or his skill at investing wisely and saving carefully. It's about his unwillingness to share and be generous, his inability to see that everything he had he had been given.

One way of translating this story for our day is to ask how well we share what we have saved with others who need our support, and who haven't been given as much as we have.

That sharing is not only about money of course, it's as much about our time and energy and skills and compassion, even our patience and our prayers.

It's about our faithfulness and our generosity and our hospitality, our thanks giving as well as our cash giving.

The church we belong to doesn't define that sharing, but it certainly nurtures and encourages that sharing, centring and returning us to the love that comes new every morning, that our wakening and uprising prove.

The music and the liturgy, the bread we break, the friends we make, the peace we pass and receive, the physical space that helps us lift up our hearts, the words that sustain us here, we used to call them the comfortable words until the adjective was stolen by the soft furnishings industry,

all the blessings of being part of the body of Christ and the People of God called Anglican, all of that is part of the giving and receiving of holy things, the things through which we are able to be rich toward God.

And keeping those things together, and this cathedral show on the road, takes the money that I wasn't going to talk about today.

Justin, the new bishop of Wellington describes the church, in the western world at least, as walking in exodus times. We're heading out into the wilderness, he argues, and no one has the GPS setting for the promised land.

This cathedral is nowhere near as full as when my grandmother sat in the pews here. Some days you might wonder why people find it hard to walk through these doors.

Our job as faithful, thankful, expectant, generous people is hold this space open and keep it warm with our presence and our prayers and our music and the poetry of our liturgy so that others can discover anew, or rediscover again its power and grace.

It's not as though the people who stay away have all been here and checked us out and heard the words and music of the Christian story and the Anglican tradition and said to themselves, thanks but no thanks.

When our Cathedral Links committee invited local business people from the streets around the cathedral to come and visit and share a drink and meet us, 90% of them said they'd never been inside the building and knew little or nothing about what happened here.

Our public relations and marketing record is about as dismal as it gets. If we were selling toasters, the world would still be eating bread.

I don't know about being in the wilderness but we are certainly living through in-between times. The old negative images of a church of guilt and obligation, known more for what it's against than what it's for, still lurk. The church of hospitality and grace is still struggling to show its face.

But it's not all that bad either. The people who do come are here because they want to be here, not because it's fashionable or compulsory.

And if you look carefully at the faces of our Cathedral Kids or our choristers as they bounce around this place as though it belongs to them, you can't believe it's all going to end with old folks like me.

Our job is to keep this cathedral alive and well and welcoming so we can pass this inheritance on. And the great thing about being part of a cathedral like this is that the sheer scale and size and depth and breadth and beauty of that inheritance is obvious on every side. And the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us make their presence felt and surround us here.

One third of the people on our cathedral roll give regularly, according to their means which varies enormously. Those who can afford five dollars a week sit alongside those who can give \$100 a week. And nobody, not even the dean, knows who gives how much except a single trusted laywoman who is the offertory recorder. In this church you can be sure no one will try and tell you how much to give and what you can afford. That's the Anglican way. But they might ask you to consider giving regularly.

If we doubled the number who did that, our struggle to pay for ministry would be changed overnight. If we saw our church giving as our core spending rather than our discretionary dollars, the treasurer would get a good night's sleep again.

One of the great things I learnt about our cathedral story is that, unlike the first building, this one was built out of lots of small gifts from lots of people. We need to rediscover that sense of scale, and it will only happen if lots of people make this place their own.

The chances of that happening here, in this beautiful place, in the middle of a city, striking enough to catch the attention of all who pass by, endowed with a great organ and a rich tradition of words and music, are better than most other Anglican locations I know. And should new people look inside and receive welcome and acceptance and inspiration from the words and music offered here, well just imagine what might happen here. We could end up with a community of a size that does justice to the size of the building. We already know that can and does happen when we get it right with what we offer here.

In this cathedral and its resurrection story we have the seed for what the future urban church in Aotearoa might be. The seed is well rooted here. We have to keep it growing. That task is our privilege and our calling.

***Waiapu Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Napier***  
***23<sup>rd</sup> June 23, 2013 - Stewardship Sunday - Luke 12:13 -21***

***Bishop John Bluck, Acting-Dean***

The job description they handed me when I arrived back here four months ago was pretty simple. Keep people talking to each other, make sure the organ gets a good launching, don't argue with the choir, or the flower guild, preach lots of sermons, don't make any major changes (though small ones are OK), don't spend any money and on one Sunday at least, ask for some more.

Well this is the Sunday and I'm not looking forward to it.  
I'd rather preach to Anglicans on believing in miracles than giving money.

Money, like sex, is not what we talk easily about in Anglican churches, even though we spend a fortune on building them, and even more to keep them standing.  
And why is that? Something about our Church of England heritage, where up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century at least they had lots of money. Up until the collapse of British agriculture, English clergy enjoyed generous livings, until they had to learn to live in genteel poverty.

Other churches don't have this coyness about cash.  
If you're a Mormon you pay up and give free missionary service overseas as well.  
Most Pentecostal churches tithe – 10% of what you earn thank you very much and no questions asked. And there are some small groups of fundamentalist Christians in New Zealand where you have to give everything you own in order to join, even your children's right to marry who they like.  
The thriving Pacific Island churches in this country pose the biggest challenge to our Anglican piety about money. They see giving as a very public, very competitive priority – you feed your church even before your family. Their fund raising invariably involves the choir. The women members dance and sing, wearing very little but flax and coconut oil, and you respond by sticking your notes to their bare skin. And a five dollar note would be an insult.

The cathedral music director didn't think that would be a good idea today, so we'll move right along and continue to mark this stewardship Sunday by talking about everything else but money.

Because it is a chance for us to take a pause and ask some wider questions about why we gather here Sunday by Sunday and sustain this massive building and this ambitious programme of ministry and hospitality, music and liturgy; all of this time honoured routine that many people out there value and take for granted but don't want to pay for.

Stewardship Sunday is as good time to take stock of what we're doing, in the same way that writer Fiona Farrell says the Christchurch earthquake forced people to stop and take stock of what they were doing with their lives, and having survived the quake, ask whether they wanted to simply keep on keeping on.

Let's not wait for an earthquake to do that. Let's use a day like this to review and re-adjust our priorities, not simply keeping on keeping on, but putting first things first.

Which brings us to the biblical readings. They leave us in no doubt about what comes first.

The Old Testament passage tells us to be faithful above everything else, to love God and honour his commandments – write them on your front door and bind them to your arm and your forehead.

If they had tattoos back then, we'd be told to do that.

And the epistle tells us to give thanks constantly, for everything, in all circumstances. It calls us to be the sort of grateful people that see life as a gift, every day as a blessing.

Name me a single thing you have and enjoy, to paraphrase St Paul, that you didn't first receive as a gift from someone around you or before, and ultimately from God.

The hymn we sang last Sunday says it beautifully:

*New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove..  
new mercies each returning day  
hover around us while we pray..*

and if we learn to live in a state of thankful expectancy, then we will find

*new treasures still of countless price,  
every hour of the day  
if on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find..*

The readings, like the hymn leave us in no doubt about the way we should see the world and lead our lives and order our priorities and hallow all we find.

But just in case there is any hesitation about any of that, the gospel spells it out with the subtlety of a sledge hammer in the hands of that big fellow in the Mitre Ten ads.

The parable is called, just in case we miss the point, The story of the Rich Fool.

He stores up all his treasures – ample goods laid up for many years and then, he relaxes, eats, drinks and is merry.

Which he's entitled to, after a life time of working and saving.

The story to this point could be a model for Kiwi Saver or a respectable superannuation scheme.

Any retirement village would love this fellow.

But the story turns nasty.

God calls this man to account, not for his saving but for not being rich toward God, which probably means he kept his treasures to himself and wasn't good at sharing them around.

In God's eyes, that makes the man, not a prudent investor, but a fool.

It's tough stuff. The judgement is not about the man's wealth, or his skill at investing wisely and saving carefully. It's about his unwillingness to share and be generous, his inability to see that everything he had he had been given.

One way of translating this story for our day is to ask how well we share what we have saved with others who need our support, and who haven't been given as much as we have.

That sharing is not only about money of course, it's as much about our time and energy and skills and compassion, even our patience and our prayers.

It's about our faithfulness and our generosity and our hospitality,  
our thanks giving as well as our cash giving.

The church we belong to doesn't define that sharing,  
but it certainly nurtures and encourages that sharing,  
centring and returning us to the love that comes new every morning, that our wakening and  
uprising prove.

The music and the liturgy, the bread we break, the friends we make, the peace we pass and  
receive, the physical space that helps us lift up our hearts, the words that sustain us here,  
we used to call them the comfortable words until the adjective was stolen by the soft  
furnishings industry,

all the blessings of being part of the body of Christ and the People of God called Anglican,  
all of that is part of the giving and receiving of holy things,  
the things through which we are able to be rich toward God.

And keeping those things together, and this cathedral show on the road, takes the money  
that I wasn't going to talk about today.

Justin, the new bishop of Wellington describes the church, in the western world at least, as  
walking in exodus times. We're heading out into the wilderness, he argues, and no one has  
the GPS setting for the promised land.

This cathedral is nowhere near as full as when my grandmother sat in the pews here. Some  
days you might wonder why people find it hard to walk through these doors.

Our job as faithful, thankful, expectant, generous people is hold this space open and keep it  
warm with our presence and our prayers and our music and the poetry of our liturgy so that  
others can discover anew, or rediscover again its power and grace.

It's not as though the people who stay away have all been here and checked us out and  
heard the words and music of the Christian story and the Anglican tradition and said to  
themselves, thanks but no thanks.

When our Cathedral Links committee invited local business people from the streets around  
the cathedral to come and visit and share a drink and meet us, 90% of them said they'd  
never been inside the building and knew little or nothing about what happened here.

Our public relations and marketing record is about as dismal as it gets. If we were selling  
toasters, the world would still be eating bread.

I don't know about being in the wilderness but we are certainly living through in-between  
times. The old negative images of a church of guilt and obligation, known more for what it's  
against than what it's for, still lurk. The church of hospitality and grace is still struggling to  
show its face.

But it's not all that bad either. The people who do come are here because they want to be  
here, not because it's fashionable or compulsory.

And if you look carefully at the faces of our Cathedral Kids or our choristers as they bounce  
around this place as though it belongs to them, you can't believe it's all going to end with old  
folks like me.

Our job is to keep this cathedral alive and well and welcoming so we can pass this inheritance on. And the great thing about being part of a cathedral like this is that the sheer scale and size and depth and breadth and beauty of that inheritance is obvious on every side. And the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us make their presence felt and surround us here.

One third of the people on our cathedral roll give regularly, according to their means which varies enormously. Those who can afford five dollars a week sit alongside those who can give \$100 a week. And nobody, not even the dean, knows who gives how much except a single trusted laywoman who is the offertory recorder. In this church you can be sure no one will try and tell you how much to give and what you can afford. That's the Anglican way. But they might ask you to consider giving regularly.

If we doubled the number who did that, our struggle to pay for ministry would be changed overnight. If we saw our church giving as our core spending rather than our discretionary dollars, the treasurer would get a good night's sleep again.

One of the great things I learnt about our cathedral story is that, unlike the first building, this one was built out of lots of small gifts from lots of people. We need to rediscover that sense of scale, and it will only happen if lots of people make this place their own.

The chances of that happening here, in this beautiful place, in the middle of a city, striking enough to catch the attention of all who pass by, endowed with a great organ and a rich tradition of words and music, are better than most other Anglican locations I know. And should new people look inside and receive welcome and acceptance and inspiration from the words and music offered here, well just imagine what might happen here. We could end up with a community of a size that does justice to the size of the building. We already know that can and does happen when we get it right with what we offer here.

In this cathedral and its resurrection story we have the seed for what the future urban church in Aotearoa might be. The seed is well rooted here. We have to keep it growing. That task is our privilege and our calling.

***Waiapu Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Napier***  
***23<sup>rd</sup> June 23, 2013 - Stewardship Sunday - Luke 12:13 -21***

***Bishop John Bluck, Acting-Dean***

The job description they handed me when I arrived back here four months ago was pretty simple. Keep people talking to each other, make sure the organ gets a good launching, don't argue with the choir, or the flower guild, preach lots of sermons, don't make any major changes (though small ones are OK), don't spend any money and on one Sunday at least, ask for some more.

Well this is the Sunday and I'm not looking forward to it.  
I'd rather preach to Anglicans on believing in miracles than giving money.

Money, like sex, is not what we talk easily about in Anglican churches, even though we spend a fortune on building them, and even more to keep them standing.  
And why is that? Something about our Church of England heritage, where up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century at least they had lots of money. Up until the collapse of British agriculture, English clergy enjoyed generous livings, until they had to learn to live in genteel poverty.

Other churches don't have this coyness about cash.  
If you're a Mormon you pay up and give free missionary service overseas as well.  
Most Pentecostal churches tithe – 10% of what you earn thank you very much and no questions asked. And there are some small groups of fundamentalist Christians in New Zealand where you have to give everything you own in order to join, even your children's right to marry who they like.  
The thriving Pacific Island churches in this country pose the biggest challenge to our Anglican piety about money. They see giving as a very public, very competitive priority – you feed your church even before your family. Their fund raising invariably involves the choir. The women members dance and sing, wearing very little but flax and coconut oil, and you respond by sticking your notes to their bare skin. And a five dollar note would be an insult.

The cathedral music director didn't think that would be a good idea today, so we'll move right along and continue to mark this stewardship Sunday by talking about everything else but money.

Because it is a chance for us to take a pause and ask some wider questions about why we gather here Sunday by Sunday and sustain this massive building and this ambitious programme of ministry and hospitality, music and liturgy; all of this time honoured routine that many people out there value and take for granted but don't want to pay for.

Stewardship Sunday is as good time to take stock of what we're doing, in the same way that writer Fiona Farrell says the Christchurch earthquake forced people to stop and take stock of what they were doing with their lives, and having survived the quake, ask whether they wanted to simply keep on keeping on.

Let's not wait for an earthquake to do that. Let's use a day like this to review and re-adjust our priorities, not simply keeping on keeping on, but putting first things first.

Which brings us to the biblical readings. They leave us in no doubt about what comes first.

The Old Testament passage tells us to be faithful above everything else, to love God and honour his commandments – write them on your front door and bind them to your arm and your forehead.

If they had tattoos back then, we'd be told to do that.

And the epistle tells us to give thanks constantly, for everything, in all circumstances. It calls us to be the sort of grateful people that see life as a gift, every day as a blessing.

Name me a single thing you have and enjoy, to paraphrase St Paul, that you didn't first receive as a gift from someone around you or before, and ultimately from God.

The hymn we sang last Sunday says it beautifully:

*New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove..  
new mercies each returning day  
hover around us while we pray..*

and if we learn to live in a state of thankful expectancy, then we will find

*new treasures still of countless price,  
every hour of the day  
if on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find..*

The readings, like the hymn leave us in no doubt about the way we should see the world and lead our lives and order our priorities and hallow all we find.

But just in case there is any hesitation about any of that, the gospel spells it out with the subtlety of a sledge hammer in the hands of that big fellow in the Mitre Ten ads.

The parable is called, just in case we miss the point, The story of the Rich Fool.

He stores up all his treasures – ample goods laid up for many years and then, he relaxes, eats, drinks and is merry.

Which he's entitled to, after a life time of working and saving.

The story to this point could be a model for Kiwi Saver or a respectable superannuation scheme.

Any retirement village would love this fellow.

But the story turns nasty.

God calls this man to account, not for his saving but for not being rich toward God, which probably means he kept his treasures to himself and wasn't good at sharing them around.

In God's eyes, that makes the man, not a prudent investor, but a fool.

It's tough stuff. The judgement is not about the man's wealth, or his skill at investing wisely and saving carefully. It's about his unwillingness to share and be generous, his inability to see that everything he had he had been given.

One way of translating this story for our day is to ask how well we share what we have saved with others who need our support, and who haven't been given as much as we have.

That sharing is not only about money of course, it's as much about our time and energy and skills and compassion, even our patience and our prayers.

It's about our faithfulness and our generosity and our hospitality,  
our thanks giving as well as our cash giving.

The church we belong to doesn't define that sharing,  
but it certainly nurtures and encourages that sharing,  
centring and returning us to the love that comes new every morning, that our wakening and  
uprising prove.

The music and the liturgy, the bread we break, the friends we make, the peace we pass and  
receive, the physical space that helps us lift up our hearts, the words that sustain us here,  
we used to call them the comfortable words until the adjective was stolen by the soft  
furnishings industry,

all the blessings of being part of the body of Christ and the People of God called Anglican,  
all of that is part of the giving and receiving of holy things,  
the things through which we are able to be rich toward God.

And keeping those things together, and this cathedral show on the road, takes the money  
that I wasn't going to talk about today.

Justin, the new bishop of Wellington describes the church, in the western world at least, as  
walking in exodus times. We're heading out into the wilderness, he argues, and no one has  
the GPS setting for the promised land.

This cathedral is nowhere near as full as when my grandmother sat in the pews here. Some  
days you might wonder why people find it hard to walk through these doors.

Our job as faithful, thankful, expectant, generous people is hold this space open and keep it  
warm with our presence and our prayers and our music and the poetry of our liturgy so that  
others can discover anew, or rediscover again its power and grace.

It's not as though the people who stay away have all been here and checked us out and  
heard the words and music of the Christian story and the Anglican tradition and said to  
themselves, thanks but no thanks.

When our Cathedral Links committee invited local business people from the streets around  
the cathedral to come and visit and share a drink and meet us, 90% of them said they'd  
never been inside the building and knew little or nothing about what happened here.

Our public relations and marketing record is about as dismal as it gets. If we were selling  
toasters, the world would still be eating bread.

I don't know about being in the wilderness but we are certainly living through in-between  
times. The old negative images of a church of guilt and obligation, known more for what it's  
against than what it's for, still lurk. The church of hospitality and grace is still struggling to  
show its face.

But it's not all that bad either. The people who do come are here because they want to be  
here, not because it's fashionable or compulsory.

And if you look carefully at the faces of our Cathedral Kids or our choristers as they bounce  
around this place as though it belongs to them, you can't believe it's all going to end with old  
folks like me.

Our job is to keep this cathedral alive and well and welcoming so we can pass this inheritance on. And the great thing about being part of a cathedral like this is that the sheer scale and size and depth and breadth and beauty of that inheritance is obvious on every side. And the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us make their presence felt and surround us here.

One third of the people on our cathedral roll give regularly, according to their means which varies enormously. Those who can afford five dollars a week sit alongside those who can give \$100 a week. And nobody, not even the dean, knows who gives how much except a single trusted laywoman who is the offertory recorder. In this church you can be sure no one will try and tell you how much to give and what you can afford. That's the Anglican way. But they might ask you to consider giving regularly.

If we doubled the number who did that, our struggle to pay for ministry would be changed overnight. If we saw our church giving as our core spending rather than our discretionary dollars, the treasurer would get a good night's sleep again.

One of the great things I learnt about our cathedral story is that, unlike the first building, this one was built out of lots of small gifts from lots of people. We need to rediscover that sense of scale, and it will only happen if lots of people make this place their own.

The chances of that happening here, in this beautiful place, in the middle of a city, striking enough to catch the attention of all who pass by, endowed with a great organ and a rich tradition of words and music, are better than most other Anglican locations I know. And should new people look inside and receive welcome and acceptance and inspiration from the words and music offered here, well just imagine what might happen here. We could end up with a community of a size that does justice to the size of the building. We already know that can and does happen when we get it right with what we offer here.

In this cathedral and its resurrection story we have the seed for what the future urban church in Aotearoa might be. The seed is well rooted here. We have to keep it growing. That task is our privilege and our calling.