

How much is it really worth?

The readings this week have a certain feel about them that can make us shudder. None of us are exempt from the feeling that we ought to think about putting something aside for that “rainy day”. After all the Government is continually urging us to think about our future – is there enough in the pension pot to cover my needs? What about my old age? Who’ll pay for my medical and care home needs when I’m no longer able to look after myself? Such thoughts are not to be dismissed, but as with all things we have to measure the value of what is necessary alongside the value of what is required, and it is the latter which I think Jesus wants us to grapple with and think about.

In the world around us we are constantly made aware of the dichotomy between the haves and the have-nots, and the massive imbalance in the percentage of the world’s population that enjoys the majority of its wealth in resources and riches, and the percentage that survives on just a dollar a day. What should our reaction and response be? Pope Francis calls for a Church for the poor yet there is no garage sale about to be announced outside St Peter’s so what is it that he is calling for? Well I think the answer lies in the last couple of sentences of the Gospel:

Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul, and this hoard of yours whose will it be then? So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God.

The cup of human kindness is not necessarily one which flows with £ or \$ signs but rather is expressed through acts of generosity and love which money cannot buy. And this applies to all aspects of our lives; our marriages, our families, our relationships are not valued because we can measure them in terms of material possessions such as houses or cars or bank balances, but because we value them for the witness and meaning they afford. There should be no profit or loss account in the balance sheet of love; no debits to be set against the credits, no pre-payments set off against accruals. We don’t keep such ledgers when we see need and want. We don’t think about the surplus in the account and calculate how much love I can afford to expend without going overdrawn. No, we act because it is the right thing to do.

And what is the motivation for this? Well just look again at the readings and in particular St Paul’s exhortation to the Colossians. *You must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is.* Now don’t misunderstand this. Paul is not talking as if *heaven* were somehow separate and apart from where we are now. No the emphasis is on that last phrase *where Christ is*, and that is what we have to understand, Christ amongst us, alongside us, living in our midst. If we grasp this reality then the kingdom is being made the reality that Christ called for and the value of all our goods and possessions have to be measured in terms of this kingdom. This can only be achieved by applying them alongside and using them to achieve the goal which Christ asks of us all: to love one another as I have loved you.

How much is that worth? Well, Matthew in his parable of the Last Judgement makes it clear. It is in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick and the prisoner where we meet Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.