**Morning Praise @ Home 9th March 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading 2 Corinthians 8:1 – 9

### Reflection from John THE JOY OF GIVING

###

Today I had the option of preaching on three different topics –**Money, sex or politics** and in the end decided you all deserve to know how to experience overflowing joy……so at the request of the PCC I am talking about money or to be more precise the overflowing joy that comes from everyone showing costly generosity.

In our Bible passage for today - 2 Corinthians 8 Paul begins

**We want you to know:…….**

***We want you all to know*** *that as Christians we believe in a generous God, who reaches down to humanity in the person of Jesus his Son and who in turn longs for us to share his generosity with others. A generous life is therefore a hallmark of our Christian faith and a testament to it, as the more generous we are, the more we reflect the generous God we believe in.*

*We also* ***want you to know*** *that we deeply appreciate the generosity that is shown by a goodly number in our congregation. Alongside our regular giving through plate giving, standing order, planned giving and giving for special causes we have over the years been able to achieve significant ministry goals to bless others and build the Church.*

***We also want you to know*** *that more recently we have become aware that all is not as it seems. So, as a general rule we receive almost 50% of our total giving from just 7 households. Without those households we would be in constant financial trouble.*

***We now need you to know*** *that by the end of last year our regular income is showing a deficit of around £10,000.*

*The PCC are having to face up to the fact that even they do not all account for the generosity of those seven households and they too are now faced with the challenge to review their own ways of giving generously.*

***So*****we want you to know** *that Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians* about the amazing, sacrificial generosity of a little and poor church in Macedonia to a struggling church in Jerusalem.

This inspiring story is that amid poverty and persecution their gift is beyond what they can afford. Their giving was not only generous it was sacrificial.

And they actually abounded in joy for the privilege of giving. They longed to give.

It all starts not with writing a cheque but with a deep recognition of God’s generous love in the life of Jesus through which joy rises up and from that joy - generosity flows out to others.

That sequence is crucial for all Christians growing to become generous followers of Jesus.

"When poverty-stricken Macedonians press Paul for the privilege of giving money to other poor Christians, we may assume that this is what they want to do, not just ought to do, or have to do, but really long to do. It is their joy – an extension of their joy in God. To be sure, they are 'denying themselves' whatever pleasures or comforts they could have from the money they give away, but the joy of extending God's grace to others is a far better reward than anything money could buy.

Why does Paul tell this story and speak this way?

Well Paul is using the example of the Macedonian Church to try and inspire the Church at Corinth to make good on a promise they had made a year earlier to give generously. They meant well but had not thought and prayed it through and carried out their responsibility.

So, Paul is happy to use Macedonian generosity to challenge Corinth to finish what they started (2 Cor. 8:10-12) but appeals to them for a more profound reason.

Paul is not concerned simply to raise money but to change the way the Corinthians think about money.

The gracious giving to which 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 points is our ongoing response to God’s generosity as the foundation for the whole of life including our money.

Here is a key truth about generosity and giving. We can often feel like beggars pleading for money, embarrassed for fear of upsetting people.

But in truth the invitation to give is an invitation to increase your weekly gift to the work of our parish and to participate in the outpouring of grace in our lives and in the life of the local church.

Paul’s boldness in addressing the sensitive issue of money teaches us not to be hesitant in talking money as a church.

But we also learn from this passage about how we talk about it. Budgets, appeals and techniques all have a legitimate place but are all to be understood in the richer context of grace.

Financial giving is a participation in the grace of God, as is the giving of time and talents. The giving of the latter does not absolve me of responsibility for generous giving.

So my role today is straightforwardly to remind every single member of our congregation of the need to regularly review your generosity to the Church. I start with myself. I go on to speak to Wardens and the entire PCC and I ask everyone to make a collective response to increase your giving - not to leave it to a few but to be part of a whole Church outpouring of generosity.

There is no coercion here - or as Paul says in verse 8 - no command but a straightforward reminder of why we should all give generously to support this Church and other ministries out of love for God.

Our Church needs everyone to respond at this time. Not a few folk but all of us.

We are asking everyone to pray and ask the Lord to inspire you to give thoughtfully in a planned way and if at all possible to significantly increase your regular giving. It needs some organising. In the same vein as Paul asked the Christians at Corinth to get sorted and organise their good will.

It can be done online, through your bank via standing order. It can be done by gift aid which increases the giving of a tax-payer by 25%. This is just the means of giving. Our motive is also vital. This is not an emotional appeal but a calling forth of your Christian faith to respond to God through our pockets, wallets and accounts.

Thinking ahead everyone can also increase their generosity by leaving a legacy to the Church. We have a leaflet which will be available in the coming weeks if you are wanting to think that through.

**There really is a joy in giving**. If you have seen the impact of the Mango Project or been to see the impact of changed lives and fresh hope through TEAR FUND as Sue and I did in Uganda.

**If you have seen the work of a local Church greatly enhanced** through focused generosity and genuine Christian compassion. Of lives being changed by the Gospel then you will come to know the tingling joy of seeing the Church at its best… It will spill out and bless many.

**Please don’t be shy or embarrassed by this request for giving.** It’s a privilege to be generous and if that generosity eradicates our £10,000 deficit and more in the next few months…..Wow, what a joy. **Amen**

### Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Sue Coyne**

Lord God, you emptied yourself to rescue us when we could not rescue ourselves and we owe you all we have and are. With grateful hearts we trust that you will continue to act with love and power in these areas which concern us:

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**Heavenly Father**,

* We lift up to you the millions of vulnerable people who are being impacted by Donald Trump’s decision to stop all US overseas aid, as well by as the reduced funding that will now flow their way from the UK. Lord, please prompt individual Christians to respond more generously themselves to the appeals made by the Disasters Emergency Committee members, many of which are Christian Charities. Meanwhile we pray that you will soften the heart of 1st world leaders, reminding them of your call for compassion towards the vulnerable.
* We pray that you give wisdom and insight to President Zelensky as he has to negotiate with untrustworthy powers, and that a workable peace for Ukraine, which reflects your desire for justice, is established. Please also guide the discussions of Arab national leaders trying to resolve the Israel/Gaza conflict.
* We lift up to you our nation’s leaders, as they try to juggle what is right with what is possible, what they want with what is affordable. May those UK politicians who know you personally be beacons of wisdom, hope and integrity to their colleagues, that the Christian ideals which underpin our constitution may come to the fore once more.

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**Lord Jesus**,

* Your church is called to reach out to the weak, the sick, the homeless, the alien and the poverty-stricken. Please strengthen church leaders in those European countries where anger, fuelled by far-right movements, is being directed at those you tell us to care for. Please grant these Christian leaders unity to stand together and courage to confront malevolence and prejudice. Protect them and their families as they commend the values of the New Testament.
* As consideration is given to the selection of a new Archbishop of Canterbury, please prompt the right people to recommend your desired candidate, and give conviction to anyone nominated that you will uphold them in what is an extremely difficult role.
* We pray that, as your local representatives in this area, we may be so generous with our time, our talents and our finances in serving the neighbourhood and supporting the church that non-believers are prompted to ask about our motivation, and discover that it is in response to your self-giving love.

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**Holy Spirit**,

* In sharing in this community, we name in our hearts for your especial care those we know who are facing illness .., those who fear isolation .., those who are bereaved .., those who know that their powers are failing and do not know to whom they can turn .. . Please come alongside all those who are feeling vulnerable and scared right now - and also prompt us to notice their need and respond to it. Help us to so trust your provision that we give of ourselves without fearing the cost.
* We raise up the staff of local care and nursing homes, as well as the community nurses and carers who offer practical support to the frail. We pray for those who run local foodbanks and pray that more may share the vision of Nigel Griffiths in contributing to funding for these ministries of compassion.
* We pray for St Nicholas’ outreach to children - Open the Book, Messy Church, St Nic’s Nippers, the planned ministry to Junior age pupils. We pray for responsive hearts and minds in children and their families, and that you will give clear guidance and fresh inspiration to the teams and individuals who lead these ministries. Keep them unified in spirit and purpose so that they can commend your love with creativity and grace.

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

Father, Son & Spirit, please move us through these prayers, that we, your people may be part of your generous answer.

*MERCIFUL FATHER*: **ACCEPT THESE PRAYERS FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR SON, OUR SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**