



Update on St Mary’s Vision and Finance

During July three open sessions were held to enable people to hear more about the Vision for St Mary’s over the next few years, and to learn about the financial challenges that are emerging. The sessions saw lively conversation about what happens next—and feedback on what was discussed and the questions asked is available on the Vision and Values page of the church website.

An immediate key issue is the process for developing children’s and youth work following the decision not to extend Ryan’s contract. A small group is exploring options at present and they will report back to the PCC in October. It is intended that a clear view on the way forward, including a timetable for any appointment, would be in place by the end of the calendar year.

So what now.....

Over the next few weeks please take the opportunity to prayerfully consider the ways in which you may be able to support and help St Mary’s in its life and activities. We rely on the gifts, talents and skills of so many, and there are always opportunities for more to join in.

One of the reasons for bringing forward Gift Sunday from its usual time in November is to help plan the budget for the next few years. Having a clearer picture of our income from planned giving is vital in setting a realistic budget. Every new or increased amount of giving, however small or large, is both vital and valuable for our vision to continue to be carried out. **If you are able please take a moment to review your giving using the enclosed response leaflet.**

If you would like more information, or an chance to talk through any questions or comments on the Vision please speak to the David, Dan or Michael, or the churchwardens and treasurer.

The 23 September, Gift Sunday, will be an opportunity to celebrate the many gifts, talents and resources that God provides for growing God’s Kingdom through St Mary’s Princes Risborough, and to review again our own response in light of God’s generosity. The name may have changed, from ‘Thank you to God Sunday’ or ‘Stewardship Sunday’, but the emphasis and theme is similar.

Over the next three weeks our services will explore some biblical foundations on God’s provision . The topics and readings for each week are shown below. This leaflet provides a study outline overleaf for today’s talk. Similar leaflets will be available for the next two Sundays.

9 th Sep- tember	Possessions – who does the possessing?	*Psalm 24 Luke 12: 22- 32	Explore the nature of God’s ownership of all things. Key question is how can we cultivate a sense of dedication of all we own to God?
16 th Sep- tember	Stewardship – for whom, for what and when?	James 4: 13- 16 *Matthew 25: 31-46	Explore the idea of stewardship – stewardship of God’s provision and stewardship of our gifts and talents. Key question is how does an attitude of stewardship change how money is used?
23 rd Sep- tember	Giving – the real investment	*2Cor.8:1- 5,13-15; 9:12 -15 Luke 18: 18- 30	Explore the idea that giving is as central to Christian life as prayer. Giving is an act that helps dethrones money as ‘god’.

Stewardship—for whom, for what and when?

Today the term steward is often associated with someone assisting at an event—a car park steward for example. A usage that seems quite different from the traditional understanding of a steward as someone entrusted with another's property and charged with managing it in the owner's best interest. It is this older idea that underlies the biblical thinking about stewardship. That we are stewards of God's created world, and have a responsibility to use all of God's gifts appropriately.

A time to reflect:

What difference does it make to think of yourself as a steward of your abilities and talents (resources and gifts)? How does an attitude of stewardship differ from an attitude of possession?

The end of Matthew chapter 25 is often given a title about sheep and goats as that is the imagery used to distinguish two groups. It's not always clear though which group is which, or exactly why sheep and goats have been chosen. However the language and imagery is not really the point: Jesus' teaching is about the impact of the choices we make in using the abilities and talents, resources and gifts that we have in relationship with others.

Do we use them to further and build God's kingdom, building relationships with those around us, seeking peace and reconciliation, caring for our local community, our country, the world?

A time to reflect:

What skills, experiences, abilities or resources do you have? How are these used to build God's kingdom? What areas need more attention? What could help you nurture your abilities and resources in working for all of God's creation?

If all we have is from God, even the smallest things we have will make a difference in God's kingdom.

Most things are impossible

Most things are impossible:

Like a piece of toast becoming Governor General of Australia,
Or eating a milkshake with chopsticks,
Or the even distribution of food and wealth across the globe.

Some things are possible, but totally pointless:

Like using a rotary saw to cut yourself a slice of cheese,
Or building a replica of the Bounty out of Weet-bix,
Or saying you care, when don't do anything about it.

And somethings are TOO EASY:

Like selling junk food to kids,
Or eating too much chocolate,
Or ignoring a problem cos it's just too hard.

Most things are impossible,

Some things are possible,]and some things are too easy.

But one thing is for sure,

When the seemingly im-possible is proved to be possible
(perhaps even easy)

It is then the world stumbles forward

Like a drunkard from the pub onto the footpath of the future.

Maybe the richest CAN share with the poorest,

Maybe rogue traders CAN become fair traders,

Maybe need CAN outweigh greed.

Maybe most things are impossible,

But that just makes the things that are actually possible—

Everything we can do, everything we do do,

Far more valuable and far more precious.

Cameron Semmens (from Give a Man A Fish, World Vision, 2010)