

Thought for the week; God and Money

A new DIY store has opened at the bottom of the road in Kidderminster. How morally superior I feel as I drive past the queues of people waiting to get inside on a Sunday morning!

At Billingsley Church, we've just joined Easy Giving. When you make an online purchase from a retailer taking part in the scheme, they make a donation to the church. How virtuous I felt earlier this week when I bought yet more books for myself and raised £5 for the church at the same time!

Yes, there is a contradiction....

You can pick and chose Jesus's words on money to suit whatever mood you are in. "You cannot serve God and money"; "sell what you possess and give to the poor". But he also paid taxes to the temple and we know that Judas, the disciple who betrayed him, kept the "common purse"; the money that Jesus used to support himself and his followers. Perhaps the best view is that Jesus was very aware of the dangers of how wealth can corrupt and this is what he was warning against. Indeed, this is a theme that runs through the whole Bible; money, economic activity is recognised as essential for human society but it should never become the purpose of life.

This is particularly pertinent at the moment, when the Government is faced with difficult choices about how to restart the national economy. We need to buy and sell goods; the people queuing at the new shop in Kidderminster were helping to keep the staff who work there in a job. In the current situation, responsible shopping can be seen as a highly moral act.

As a church we naturally honour those who work in caring professions, those whose job involves some kind of sacrifice for the common good. Perhaps we do not do enough to give thanks for the entrepreneurs, the self-employed, the business people who work long hours and risk their own livelihoods to create the wealth that supports us all. Some may become wealthy, but if their efforts give employment and fair wages to others, I suspect they may find it easier to pass through the eye of the needle than myself. We should remember to pray for their efforts, that they may be directed at building a just and fair society.