

One of the things I hope to do next year, when I have a Sabbatical planned, is to go to Israel. In order to book a place where I hope to study, I have had to arrange for a Bankers Draft, for \$100. The place I'm going doesn't accept credit cards, which would be the quick way to do it, so a Bankers Draft it was. The Draft arrived today. \$100 - £64.86. And the price of arranging this? £20. It made me really cross that a variety of financial institutions – the Halifax use Lloyds to make the Draft – could charge me a third of what the Draft is worth to give it to me. Sometimes money gets us that way: something about it eats away at us, gets us cross. We're not paid enough, the government takes too much back, the car park has gone up again, the church has sent me something using a stamp and a postman when I only live round the corner. Money makes us cross.

Perhaps some things should make us deeply cross and worried. A friend posted a link to an American business website yesterday, which had some graphs that even I could understand. In America, unemployment is at its highest since the great depression, corporate profits are at an all time high, wages are a smaller part of the economy than they have ever been, and production workers' pay has risen 4% since 1990 while Chief Executives' pay has risen 292%. No wonder people have protested by occupying Wall Street and a group of 3,000 did the same thing in the City of London yesterday. The way our society uses money is unfair. As you may know I have given up on football for that reason. I cannot see that it is right or fair or good that Wayne Rooney should earn in a week what it will take a parish priest nine years to earn. Is a week of Wayne Rooney worth a parish priest's standard time in a parish?

There is an antidote to this grumpiness. It is Joy. Not happiness. Joy can be joyful even when there is pain and difficulty. Joy depends not on the circumstances which surround us but the hope that is in us. What else can explain that, in a time of economic hardship, the giving from our congregations has increased? What else can explain the foresight and planning which has caused three people this year to give us money long after their death, as their wills have been obeyed and their estates divided up. People have taken a joyful decision that their death, as well as their life, can make a difference. I urge you to do the same – it's national Will Month next month – go and get yours sorted out and spread joy after your death.

We give joyfully when we realise that it is God who gives joyfully and delights in us, and that our worth and value is found in God's giving, not our worthiness to receive. It's all about God, and so we can give away, because our money does not define us. We are joyful because of God's joy in us. So then we reflect that joy – indeed God gives joy through the Holy Spirit. As Christians we should be like children at Christmas with a new toy. "Look what I've got" is not about how good we are, but about how good the gift is. That's why, in Deuteronomy 14, they are commanded to party, to feast, to have a festival. They are to remember that everything they have, even the land itself, comes from God, and they do this by taking the first and best stuff and celebrating with it. They are to give away, to make sure that no one goes hungry, and they are to feast, because that reveals the love of God.

That is some antidote to the sour faced, determined, money grabbing bitterness of late capitalism. It is about taking what we have been given and showing that we know it's not ours by enjoying it, by being joyful with it. Now I have to say that unbridled joy is not always the defining emotion within the Finance Committee. But it should be. We turn over something like half a million pounds a year here, when you add everything up. God provides – our income is up this year, and not just because of bequests. But even when things look bleak, we are to be joyful, because God joys in us.

And whether we are in good times or bad, we give not because there's a crisis, but because God is good, and his church is a visible sign of his love and his joy. We give to enable the ministry of this amazing place to continue, and we give to enable mission to take place across this diocese and in the worldwide church. We give to bless others, and so we don't put huge restrictions on what we do, as if the money we give away is still ours really. We give wisely, to things which will make a difference. But above all, we give in joy. The joy of God's people thrilled with his love. And the joy of those whose treasure is in heaven. So if we then get angry about money, it is the righteous anger of those who fight for justice, not to line their own pockets.

For us, even the bankers order form is an occasion for joy. I hope it warms you too....