

# Giving in Grace Preaching programme

At St Nicholas Church, Dunnington, February 2017

**week one** – February 5<sup>th</sup> 2017 (Nick Bird)

The Parable of the Two Debtors

Genesis 50:15-21; Rom 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35

*In this parable the theme of financial indebtedness, an ever-present and harsh reality in Jesus' day as in ours, is used to illustrate the theme of forgiveness. The Greek verb *aphienai* literally means to cancel a debt, and comes to mean forgiveness. By taking a back bearing from the challenge to forgiving grace taught in the parable, we can draw some conclusions about handling financial matters in the light of the kingdom life to which Jesus calls us.*

**week two** – February 12<sup>th</sup> 2017 (tbc)

Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard

Jonah 3:10-4:11; Psalms 145:1-8; Matthew 20:1-16

*Of course, the question of generosity runs much deeper than simply our financial dealings: it includes our time and our talents as well as our treasure. But the parable is not told about money for no reason. Somehow money is the raw nerve of life that, when touched, sparks the most profound reaction. It is possible to feign, even to ourselves, the depth of our discipleship. But it is our attitudes and actions around money and giving that expose us as we really are. If our eyes are set on God and on thankfulness, then we may more easily learn to be content. If our eyes are set on our neighbours who have more than us, we will more readily be discontent and more inclined to grumble.*

**week three** – February 19<sup>th</sup> 2017 (Peter Moorhouse)

Parable of the Rented Vineyard

Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:8-16; Matthew 21:33-46

*In the parable, the vineyard is richly provided for and left in the care of tenants. This is a lovely picture of stewardship: that the God who provides what we need also extends his trust to us. The challenge is to live well with this gift, this provision. Whether our reading of this text is of wicked tenants or a rapacious landlord there will always be for us the temptation to hold tightly and possess what is given to us to hold lightly and share generously. Failure to honour God with all that is due to him, the decision to accumulate and take to ourselves what is given as a gift, is not so much the breaking of a rule as a betrayal of the trust shown to us by a God who amply supplies our needs.*

**week four** – February 26<sup>th</sup> 2017 (David Butterfield)

Render to Caesar

Isaiah 45:1-7; Psalms 96:1-9; Matthew 22:15-22

*In one sense it is true that money is simply a neutral medium of exchange, neither good nor bad. But in another sense, money is never morally neutral; it always reflects someone's values in the way it is used. Two factors need to be borne in mind. First, that my unrestricted exercise of the freedom of choice that money can offer may be oppressive to others. Second, over time, money has become (in most cultures) the primary means of human exchange. It has become increasingly sophisticated and impersonal and the ends it serves more remote from how we earn our living. Money always bears someone's image and the temptation is to want it to bear our own. Neither handling an image, nor paying tax, compromises our true freedom. But we do not find freedom by swapping Caesar's face for our own.*