

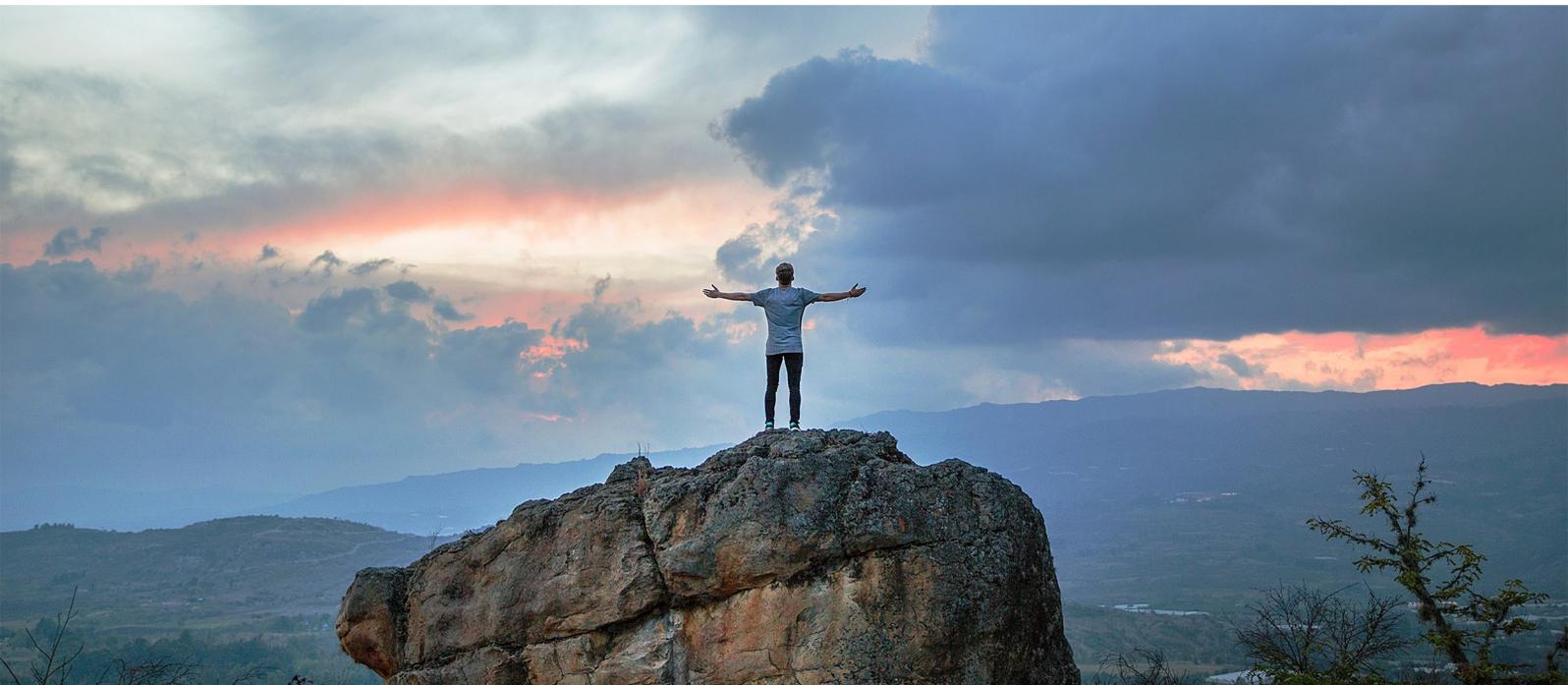
■ GENEROUS
june

GENEROUS JUNE WEEK FOUR
CLERGY NOTES FOR PREACHING ON
MARK 12:28-34
THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

We have journeyed through three weeks of the Gospel of Mark and delved into the challenge of thinking about our own church's generous culture, as well as having the chance to individually reflect on our response to this subject.

We revisit the questions we asked in week one:

- Does Generous June present you the chance to restart a focus on generosity?
- Does Generous June give you the opportunity to ask your members to review their giving?
- Does Generous June inspire people to give more of themselves, not only financially, but in their relationship with God?



We hope that so far, Generous June has been a helpful tool in bringing the subject of generosity and financial giving to the forefront of people's minds.

Week four aims to wrap up the month and give people the chance to act on what they have heard. The notes that follow aim to highlight the importance of giving financially to the church, in communion with a faith that embodies the love of God, and a love of our neighbour.

The Generosity in Mark 12:28-34

Today's Reading:

28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' 29 Jesus answered, 'The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.' 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself,' this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' After that no one dared to ask him any question.

In this passage we are challenged to love God with all that we are.

God created us with physical bodies and material needs so living well and loving God with our wealth and possessions is inevitably part of both human flourishing and Christian discipleship.

In the passage Jesus answers clearly that the most important commandment is to love God. However, Jesus was asked only about the first, most important commandment, but he adds, uninvited, a second: love your neighbour as yourself. In what sense is this the 'second' commandment?

Does it mean the second most important in rank order? Or does it mean, as we might say today, that this is the other side of the coin, a command inseparable from the first. One thing is clear: there is no love for God which does not embrace and issue in love for one's neighbour.

Love and Generosity

From a generosity perspective, this command to love God and neighbour is a profound challenge to look beyond our inherited traditions of 'the collection', the fundraising events and the need to balance the church books.

Our giving must ultimately be motivated by love, modelled by our leaders and meaningful both in terms of our own income and the ministry needs of our church. Our giving is part of our worship and the offertory should be a living part of our worship and relationship with God.



Living a Generous Life, Deciding to Give

Keeping in mind the elements in which we should love God, heart, soul, mind and strength, is so important. Good giving is a matter of obedience, thoughtfulness and decision making; as well our emotional connection to God and our neighbour. And that is why regular, planned giving is so important. We make an informed decision that is aware of the ministry needs of the church. We make an obedient decision that wrestles with the invitation of scripture to generous living. We make a heartfelt decision that responds in love to the love that God has shown to us and extends that love in tangible form to those in need.

To withhold the gift of generosity from discipleship is to withhold a crucial part of who we are before God. When we give generously, we love our neighbour because each gift, contactless, cash or direct debit, is life affirming and makes possible the ministry and mission of our church.



Our regular planned giving sustains our churches as sacred places and underwrites both ministry and mission in congregation and community. Our regular planned giving contributes to the Common Mission Fund which ensures a tangible presence of what it is to know Jesus across our diocese.

When we give generously, we do something for ourselves! To give is to release ourselves from the entrapment of a consumer culture, from the subtle and seductive claims of money on our hearts. To begin to give in a regular, committed and sacrificial manner is the beginning of a joyful journey to which many can testify.



Revisit The Six Steps



Reconsider the Six Steps of Christian Giving and the motivations of financially supporting the church:



- Has the last few weeks encouraged people to reflect on their own position on the Six Steps?
- What is the best way to challenge them to consider taking the next step?

Take some time to consider the words below – is this the message your congregation needs to hear?

*"If you don't give because no one's ever asked you, I'm asking you now.
If you don't give regularly because you've never got round to it,
I'm saying today's the day. If you don't give much because you think
St Martin's doesn't need it, I'm telling you that it does.
If you don't give a lot because you don't have a lot,
I'm saying your giving something is an example to everyone else.
If you don't give more because no one's ever said thank you,
I'm thanking you right now. If you already give until the pips squeak,
I'm saying that's wonderful, and nudge the person next to you to
do the same."*

Rev Dr Sam Wells
Vicar St-Martin-in-the-Field

The Right Time to Ask



After all we have considered and heard over the last month, now is the best time to ask your congregation to review their committed giving to the church.

For some this might mean starting to give in a regular way, for some it may mean giving less due a change in circumstance – all of which is welcomed and received with gratitude.



**ASK THOUGHTFULLY, PRAYERFULLY AND SENSITIVELY,
BUT ASK BOLDLY.**

**ASK OFF THE BACK OF OUR MONTH-LONG FOCUS ON
WHAT IT IS TO KNOW THE LOVE AND GENEROSITY OF
GOD, AND THE PART WE HAVE TO PLAY WITHIN IT.**

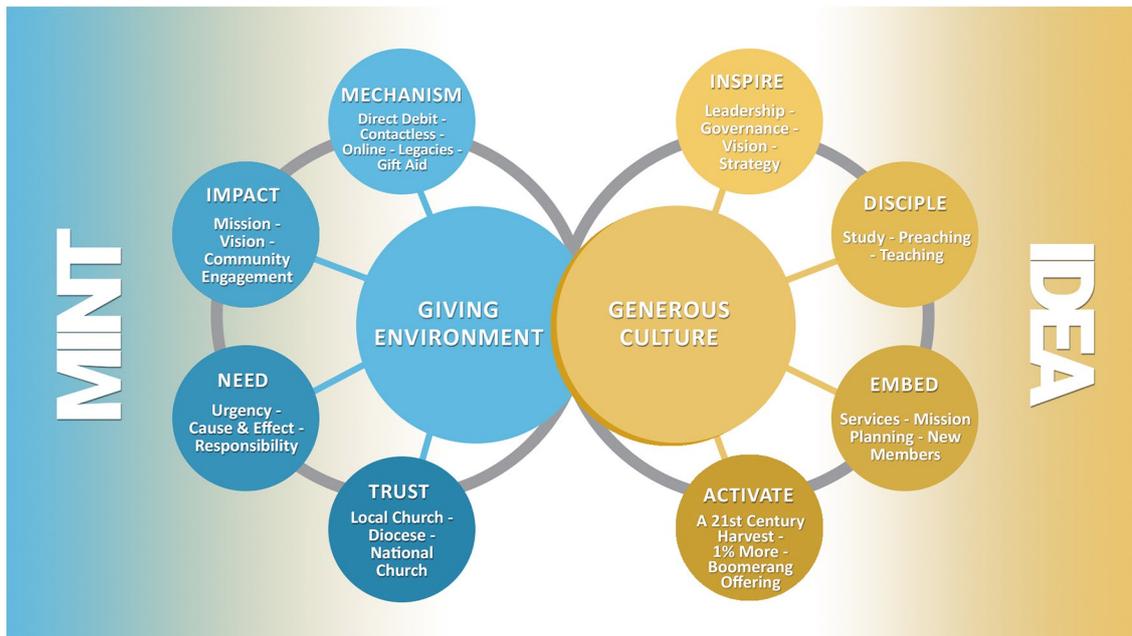
How has Generous June started the conversation?

What next?



IDEA: Take time to think about how well does your church community...

- **Inspires** people through generous leadership and celebrating generosity within the life of the church.
- **Disciples** members, through resources, teaching and learning, so people can grow in an understanding of God's generosity towards them, and how they can live generous lives.
- **Embeds** generosity in the life of the church, in its plans, services and ministry and weave it into everything the church does.
- **Activates** generosity, by providing opportunities for people to grow in generosity and apply what they have discovered.



MINT: Take time to think, does our church?

- Have the right **mechanisms** for giving, such as direct debit, contactless, online, legacies, gift aid and so on.
- Show the **impact** of people's giving, how it enables the church's ministry and mission.
- Explain the **need** for people to give, so they see how important it is that they give.
- Build **trust**, so that people have confidence that the church will spend their gifts wisely and well.

Are there things that you can challenge the church with as a whole, and people with individually?



Does Generous June 2022 give you the platform to start a journey into establishing a new culture of generosity within your community and congregation?



Consider the culture of giving at your church

Watch this video:

<https://vimeo.com/user44613837>

These notes were inspired by resources developed by Giving In Grace, a comprehensive Stewardship study tool from the Diocese of Liverpool, designed to help develop a generous church culture, see more at www.givinginGrace.org

