

**Readings:** 1st = Exod 33:12-23(P106); 2nd = 1Thes 1:1-10(P255) & Gospel = Matt 22:15-22 (P30)

**Illustration:** Can there ever be a 'thing' like total loyalty? Can there ever be a 'thing' like divided loyalty? Isn't it true that you can never do justice in pleasing both? Therefore there'll always be a greater loyalty to the 1 @ the expense of other. And so there'll be an outcry from the neglected of injustice perpetrated towards him. How if @ all can the record be set straight or the playing fields levelled. It can be dealt with very simply – don't engage more than what you can handle or if complexity is part of your lifestyle - work out the best system where there'll be dual satisfaction where both will be joyous – if that is @ all possible & if it can be achieved @ all.

**Contents:** **Exod** records Moses' conversation with God – more explicitly he wanted to establish from God whether God is satisfied with his leadership ability-**vs16**. Moses gets his confirmation in **vs17** "I'm pleased with you & know you by name." **Thes** – Paul commends the Thessalonians for their faith & the impact it had on others as well –**vs8** Macedonia, Achaia & everywhere. **Matt** – highlights the traps set by Pharisees – requesting whether they should be paying taxes to Caesar. **Vs18**-Jesus condemns their hypocrisy, yet lovingly still set aside time, to teach them. **Vs21**-Jesus' profound teaching: "Give to Caesar what's Caesar's & to God what's God's."

**Application:** The emphasis of **St. Matt** today is more a teaching on priorities & Stewardship. **APB 89-p435-par 83 & 84** – defines & expounds it. This is a discipline of church over many centuries, but with sadness a most neglected discipline. When the church teaches the subject stewardship – the negative mindset says – the church only speaks about money. That is far from the truth. Its core business is to win souls for Christ. The church isn't a business, but must run on business principles – guidelines. It incurs expenses: electricity, water, wafers, wine, candles, staff, etc. & it can't be paid with 'faith' but hard cash. There's maintenance, garden, etc.

The quality of our giving in its broadest sense is a reflection of our love for God. Here we are speaking about our talents, gifts, talents, skills, labour, money, etc. Please remember we don't give to the church anything, but to God. The church is merely the institution through which the money is channelled for the purpose of mission in the world. This reality is confirmed by **Douglas John Hall** in his book "**The Steward**" in which he brings & adds a NB dimension to his understanding of Stewardship by asserting that: "**Stewardship** is cultivated in the congregational life in order that mission might be carried out. Stewardship therefore becomes the material means by which the spiritual end is **achieved**." This point highlights a very positive element about stewardship, although he experienced negative encounters as well - as some of us may respond to this message today.

SA Citizens & more so to SARS we display a loyalty to give freely & without any or limited objections – in the manner how they deduct money for tax from our salaries on a monthly basis. This is our duty to Caesar, but we mustn't neglect to give just as freely to God. They - SARS is not our Creator - but it's ok to give. But the very moment in some churches when raising the question of loyalty & giving it immediately becomes a taboo subject

Giving is a Christian role & there are no exceptions. Rich Christians should give & poor Christians should give. Young married couples who have low incomes & high expenses should give alongside more mature people who are financially secure. New Christians should be taught to give as soon as they begin growing in their faith.

**Biblical basis for giving:** Contrary to what many may believe giving has its roots way back in the **OT**, (**Gen** 14:20, 28:22; **Lev** 27:30, **Deut** 14:23,28, **Num** 18:21, **2Chron** 31:5, **Mal** 3:8, etc.) which becomes a frightening thought & dispel immediately the myth that it's a modern & new concept. Our knowledge of **OT** therefore gives us a clearer & better picture what the **NT** wants to teach us about this NB subject. **Christian basis for giving:** No greater point of departure, or stronger sense of conviction but these incredible words: "God so loved the World that He **GAVE** His only Son, so that we may not perish, but have Everlasting Life." **John 3:16**

**In looking at Stewardship let us start with the known:** These words are recited whenever we gather as an Anglican Eucharistic Family: "Your's, Lord, is the Greatness, the Power, the Glory, the Splendour, & the Majesty; for **EVERYTHING** in Heaven & on Earth is yours. All things come from you & of your own do we give unto you." (**APB page 116 par 48**) I also need to say immediately that these words recited are Biblically based – **1 Chron 29: 10 -13**

**In Conclusion:** And when we conclude our Act of Worship we utter these powerful words: "Father Almighty we offer ourselves as a Living Sacrifice in Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us into the World in the Power of the Holy Spirit to Live & Work to your Praise & Glory." (**APB 129 – par.88**) Let us honour our own commitment unto Jesus Christ by our own utterances weekly by truly living & working to His Praise & Glory. God bless!