

A fair balance

Notes on the Bible readings

- When Paul was writing (AD 49-65), Jerusalem was the centre of the Christian church. There was great poverty there and Paul had spent the last ten years, as he travelled around, organising a collection of money for poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. This is the 'generous undertaking' (v.7) he is referring to. Collecting money for people they will never meet was an important way for Gentile Christians to express their gratitude to Jewish Christians for passing on their faith.

- Paul encourages his listeners not just to be generous now, but to continue giving to the poor. He also gives practical advice: gifts should be collected ahead of his visit so they are ready for him to take to those in need. But he is careful to ask people only to give what they can afford (vv.11-12).

- Collecting and distributing gifts to others is a way of responding to Christ's great generosity and creates 'a fair balance' (v.13) between those in Jerusalem who are currently in great need, and the Corinthians who have plenty to share. Paul makes the timeless point that one day they may be in need and they will benefit from the generosity of others.

- Paul's quote at the end is from the Old Testament account of the Israelites travelling through the wilderness with Moses (cf. Exodus 16.18). When they needed food, God provided manna, and the people had to learn to trust that there would be enough, each day, for everyone.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ Is the child giving or receiving?
- ▶ Do you find it easier to give or to receive?
- ▶ How might we be more generous?



A prayer for blessing

*Lord God, you bless us in so many ways.
And we know that each blessing grows
as we share it with others.
Please open our hearts today,
that, in receiving more from you, we can give more.
Let us be a source of blessing
through your all-encompassing love. Amen.*

A prayer for others

*Lord God, you became poor so that we might become rich.
In our world of inequality, we pray that you would show us how to
share our riches with those who are in need.
We pray for people who seek asylum in our land.
We cannot begin to understand the things they have been through.
We pray for a deep sense of your understanding, and for practical
ways to show your love.
We pray for those who work long hours for very little money,
and for those who have no security, no comfortable home to go to.
We pray for those who give their time and resources, working through
food banks, outreach centres, charities.
We pray for ourselves, that as you bless us, we will bless others. Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Lord, help me not to compare myself to others,
but to be positive about myself,
to rejoice in the gifts you have given me,
and to be willing to share them with others. Amen.*

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Live your faith

What can you give this week? Make a commitment to do one really generous thing each day this week.