

Sunday before Lent (Stewardship Sunday)
Deuteronomy 26:1-11; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; Matthew 6:19-24
15 February 2026

Sermon: Stewardship Sunday

Prologue: Stewardship

At the heart of Scripture lies a simple and important truth: nothing we have is truly ours. From the very beginning, God entrusts creation to human hands not as owners, but as stewards — people who care for something precious because it belongs to someone else, and because it is meant to bless those who come after us. Deuteronomy illustrates this. When the people finally enter the land God has given to them, they are told to gather the first fruits of the harvest and place them before the Lord. It is an act of gratitude and generosity.

Stewardship is the practice of living gratefully and giving freely. It is the way God shapes us into a people who bless others, just as we have been blessed.

And this call to stewardship isn't just ancient history. It's the vocation, the calling God places on the Church today, which is why we pause this Sunday before Lent, to reflect on how we, in this parish and diocese, are called to offer our own "first fruits" for God's work now.

Generosity

Out of this call to stewardship flows generosity. When we recognise that everything we have is received from God, offering something back becomes not a burden but a joyful response. Scripture gives us a striking picture of this in 2 Corinthians, where Paul speaks of the churches in Macedonia. They were not wealthy; in fact, they were facing hardship. And yet, St Paul says, "their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity." They begged for the privilege of giving to the collection to alleviate poverty in the Jerusalem Church caused by famine. Their generosity didn't come from surplus, but from a deep trust in God and a desire to share in God's work.

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That same trust is at the heart of Christian generosity. It draws upon our faith in the God who came as Jesus and gave everything upon the cross, and who continues to give through the resurrection and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. The gift of faith is our inheritance as we are welcomed into the family of God, through which we are transformed into the likeness of Christ. Because of the inheritance we receive in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we are called to be a generous people.

Generosity cannot be separated from our call to follow God — the call to be disciples and to be good stewards of creation. And we see this lived out in the Church's Five Marks of Mission.

We see this generosity in the everyday life of our parish — in the way we share the good news; in the many baptisms and weddings we celebrate; in the care we offer through funerals, pastoral visits, and our services in the care homes. We see it in the Welcome Café, in our work with the schools through assemblies and RE sessions of many kinds; in the support we give to those who are struggling or vulnerable, and in the commitment of our Eco Group as we look after God's creation together.

This is the faithful, steady ministry of the Church here — the daily work that connects us with the wider mission of the Church across our diocese and nation. Without the generosity of people giving to the Church, this couldn't and wouldn't happen.

Therefore, our response is twofold: we offer our thanks to God through worship and praise, and we continue that generosity through our service to the Church and in enabling the Church to serve the world God loves.

Thanksgiving and Reality

So, before anything else, I want to say thank you. On behalf of the PCC, on behalf of the Diocese, and — if I may be so bold — on behalf of God, thank you for the generosity you already show.

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Thank you for the regular, faithful giving that sustains our ministry month by month, especially through the Parish Giving Scheme. Thank you for the extraordinary gifts that have enabled projects like the POD, and for the heating and lighting. These things didn't just appear, they happened because you gave, quietly and faithfully, as an act of worship.

But part of stewardship is also telling the truth. And the truth is that, even with all this generosity, our financial challenges remain real. As I said last week, if we were to pay our full contribution to the diocese — the amount that covers the cost of having a minister in post, the training of future ministers, and the essential administrative and legal support that every parish relies on — we would be facing a shortfall of around £1,100 every week compared with our current income. That is a significant gap. After careful discussion, our PCC made the difficult decision that we simply could not pay the full amount.

And as this parish is a registered charity, our PCC as trustees have a legal responsibility to keep this church financially healthy.

And that decision has consequences. Not just for us, but for the wider Church in Birmingham. When parishes cannot meet their contribution, the diocese has fewer resources to sustain frontline ministry. That means fewer clergy, and Readers; fewer youth workers, and chaplains; fewer people serving the communities of our city at a time when the needs around us are growing, not shrinking. It means the Church's ability to offer faith, hope and love is stretched thinner just when society needs it most.

I don't say this to alarm you, but because stewardship is about seeing clearly and responding faithfully. We are part of something bigger than ourselves — a diocesan family, a Church called to serve the people in this part of the world — and our generosity helps make that possible.

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Treasure in Heaven – and in Shirley

And so, as we look honestly at our situation, I want to offer an invitation.

One of the most helpful ways we can support the life of this parish is through the Parish Giving Scheme. Giving in this way helps make us our planning easier, and sustain the ministry we have and share, from our worship and pastoral care to our work with schools, care homes, and the wider community. If you are not yet part of the scheme, can I encourage you to think and pray about whether this might be something you could take up.

Perhaps this is something to consider as we enter Lent this Wednesday. Lent is often a time when we give something up, but it is also a time when we take something up: a practice, a new discipline or a commitment that helps us grow in faith. Choosing to review our giving, or to join the Parish Giving Scheme, could be one such Lenten practice of saying “yes” to God’s work here, and “yes” to the future we believe God is shaping among us.

I think all of this ties directly into the words of Jesus in today’s Gospel: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Jesus isn’t talking about money alone; he is talking about what we value, what we invest in and what we choose to build up.

When we give to the life of this church, we are investing in something that has a real, lasting value, a treasure in heaven, as Jesus puts it. We are investing in a community where people are welcomed, prayed for, taught, supported and loved. We are investing in a church that is a treasure to this parish, a place of hope, hospitality, and faith for so many. Believe me, I meet many people every week who talk about our church as a treasure in our community.

So my invitation is simple: as we begin Lent, let us each ask what part we can play. This is not out of guilt, but out of gratitude and

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generosity and because the church in Shirley and Birmingham is precious. And because when we place what we have into God's hands, God multiplies it for the blessing of others.

Future

So let us offer what we can, in this season and beyond. We do it for today, but for those who will come after us. Generous stewardship is our ways of planting seeds we may or may never see grow, trusting that God will use our generosity to bless what happens now and the future generations, just as we have been blessed by those generous stewards of this place who came before us. Amen.

Rev'd Richard Haynes Sunday before Lent (Stewardship Sunday)

See here for more information of Parish finances

[Sunday 15th Feb PCC finances.pptx](#)