

Archdeacon Mark Ireland's Wednesday Message

Welcome to our Wednesday message.

Tucked away at the end of 2 Samuel chapter 24, is a little story about King David that gives a really helpful pointer about how to worship God in the time of pandemic. In the time of King David there was a plague which had cost the lives of 70,000 people. David, as leader of the people felt responsible and so he decided to buy a field so that he could build an altar and offer burnt sacrifices so that the plague might be stopped.

The field in question belonged to a man called Araunah. But when David went and approached Araunah to buy this field from him for this very worthy cause, Araunah refused and wanted to give it to him for nothing, but King David replied in verse 24,

“No, I insist on paying for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing” King David refuses to offer worship that costs nothing, because he knows that generous giving and sacrifice are an integral part of true worship.

That's got me thinking this week. How costly is our worship? How costly is the worship I'm going to offer this weekend? We haven't been able to attend church services for over 3 months. Hopefully, that will end soon. But in that time, we've discovered ways of worshipping God online that have been a lifeline to many. But have we maintained our generous giving to God's work? Have we increased it? The mission of the church has continued unabated all this time. Clergy have learnt new skills in leading worship online and in mastering technology. The hungry have been fed in very practical ways through food banks and soup kitchens. The sick have been ministered to, they dying and bereaved have been offered the comfort of the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ and all this work costs money. The one thing I've noticed in all the wonderful online services that I've been able to share in is that money has scarcely been mentioned at all. It's as if our English reserve has kicked in all over again. We don't like talking about money. How different our brother and sisters for example in the Diocese of the Free State in South Africa which I visited a while ago. There, the offertory in the townships was the most joyful part of the Eucharist, with clapping and dancing and drumming as people gave with exuberant joy out of the little that they had.

King David knew that generous giving is an integral part of true worship and so he said, “I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” So how costly is the worship we're going to offer to God this weekend? Now is a good time to review how much we give and also how we give. Giving through a Standing Order is much safer than handing over cash in church which has to be collected by one person then counted by another person and put in the safe and then taken by yet another person to the bank.

Giving online makes life so much easier for our hard worked treasurers and sidesmen and if you thought about giving directly through the bank but aren't sure quite what to do or how to go about it, why not this week, have a word with your church treasurer? Or, if you want further guidance, it's available on the website on the link below on your screen now.

May God bless you in your worship this weekend and however, or wherever we worship, let's remember the example of King David who said, I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” Amen

