

OT: Amos 6:1a, 4-7
NT: 1 Timothy 6:6-19
Gp: Luke 16:19-31

Years ago when I was first at St Anne's Stanley, there were two elderly sisters who were faithful members of the congregation. Both were retired teachers and both lived together in what had been their family home. They never married and had no extended family. They showed and kindness and consideration for all who attended the service, welcoming newcomers and having patience with the members of L'Arche who had a learning disability and who could be agitated and vocal during the Eucharist.

Sadly, first one died and then the other became too unwell to remain at home and, after an operation to amputate her leg, she was admitted to a nursing home. I went one day to see her and take Communion. She was one of those people who exude a deep sense of peace and as we talked about various things, she suddenly said to me, 'Aren't we rich!' It took me by surprise at the time and I've never forgotten her words. What to many may have looked like a poor life in material terms, Chrissie recognised as great wealth in what really matters, wealth in the love and grace of God.

This is not to deny that money in this world can bring happiness and contentment. Paul's words to Timothy are often misquoted and the meaning misconstrued:

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil

The love of money, not money itself.

We don't have to look far to see that poverty brings misery and troubles of its own but an obsession with gaining money beyond the basic needs brings no less discontentment. When we hear reports of someone about to become the world's first trillionaire, I certainly despair. Such a sum is beyond imagining and surely beyond anything anyone could need for the most outlandish lifestyle. It must become meaningless to the person and yet the smallest fraction of that wealth could transform a person's, a family's, a society's life.

Let Amos's words be a warning to those who enjoy the delights of this world without thought for others

*Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,
and lounge on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the stall;
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!
Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,
and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.*

The warning applies to us too, though trillionaires we may not be. We are not asked to drive ourselves into penury or be embarrassed for comforts of this world that we might enjoy. But we are asked to be mindful of others and their needs, to realise that no-one chooses homelessness or to struggle to feed and clothe

their children. We are asked to share our bounty but also to press those who are in positions of power and authority. Positions that can make a greater change than we can alone.

It is 40 years since the publication of Faith in the City, one of its authors being the then Bishop of Liverpool, David Sheppard. The following quote is from Graham Smith, who was Dean of Norwich back in 2005 when the 20th anniversary of the Report was marked.

Faith in the City began a movement which was partly political , partly theological and partly spiritual. In all three senses, it was a beacon of hope to a lot of people: local authorities felt that the dilemmas that they faced with limited resources in the face of overwhelming deprivation were being recognised; the churches on the ground felt that the rest of the Church was waking up to the realities of inner city ministry; and, most important of all, people who were locked into the poverty trap of deprived inner city communities began to feel that perhaps there could be a national understanding of the paralysis which gripped them. Faith in the City began a discussion across the nation and a movement within the Church. It showed that our common concerns could be harnessed in the common good.

Sadly, I think that somewhere that discussion has stopped and that the issues of 2025 are just as prevalent and in need of solutions as they were forty years ago.

So what can we do? Well, firstly we can pray for God's guidance and be open to his word even if the challenge is uncomfortable for us. The Holy Spirit is always wanting to shake us out of any complacency. Then we can look at how we can share the benefits that we enjoy here at the Parish Church. One of our associations is with Asylum Link and we are hoping to continue to support them in their work and have a better understanding of all who seek refuge in our city.

You can have your say in these matters by responding to the survey set up by Liverpool Together to mark the 40th anniversary of Faith in the City. The [link is on the Diocesan website](#) and the hope is to develop a new vision to meet the needs of our inner cities today.

Work is also underway to look at how the churches in our deanery of Liverpool North and Walton, which covers some of the most deprived areas of our city, can come together to share resources, to support one another and make a difference to the people we serve. Please pray for Fr Bill, our Area Dean and for all those who are undertaking this work of discerning God's will for the future of the church and the good of his people. And be open to change, it is how we grow closer to God.

To slightly misquote Paul in his letter to Timothy

We are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for ourselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that we may take hold of the life that really is life.

Something my friend Chrissie truly understood.

Revd Michelle Montrose