

Money

Recently we helped a friend fill in an HC1 form as she was unused to official applications. We were seeking to find some help for her, as she faced dental charges, which she could not afford to pay, since she was on the minimum wage in a part-time job. In our ignorance we were quite sure that this would be forthcoming. When the department concerned contacted her there was some help but she still had to pay part of the dentist's bill herself. We were shocked at the amount that the government expected a person to live on for one week. With two large houses here that gobble up twice the amount mentioned on average each day, it was difficult for us to compare but it seemed a very small and inadequate amount for anyone to live on.



Not long after, talking to a patient in the hospital, he commented that his central heating system had broken down in the middle of the winter and he had been unable to find the money to repair it. As we all know it had been bitterly cold. He was also having difficulty finding money to travel to the employment centre that was a bus ride away. He didn't possess a computer and this further limited his ability to find work. The Sister concerned came away wondering if even we, who have made promises of simplicity of lifestyle, had any idea, in reality, how the other half, so called, lived.

We have had an increasing number of people confiding in us that they were in debt. We have been very thankful that we could refer them to CAP.ⁱ Is it little wonder that often the poor envy the rich who can have whatever they want, whenever they want it. This in turn leads to a simmering resentment. Sooner or later the lid comes off.

Jesus has a different take on the rich person. He said, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort".ⁱⁱ "Woe" is an expression of a concerned compassion - almost, "I feel sorry for you rich folk". And why? Because you are comforted, that is made secure by your money. There are other similar sayings by Jesus and we can recall the parables of Dives and Lazarusⁱⁱⁱ and the man who built his barns bigger and bigger and then died!^{iv} In our pursuit of those things money can buy we usually overlook the fact of eternal life. If our security is in our possessions, or money in the bank, or both then we have no need of God. Looking at money and possessions in this light gives a different perspective. We can truly feel sorry for those who are rich.

As in so many things, as Christians, we have different values from those of the society in which we live, or do we? The danger with money is not money in itself, because we all need it, but that we come to love it. As St Paul writes, "love of money",^v or we could add, love of those things that money can buy is "a root of all kinds of evil". John Wesley preached a famous sermon on, "The Use of Money". In it he expounded his rule: "Gain all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can". Even the world would acquiesce with "gain all you can". It fits very neatly into our present society. How does this relate to the woman who can't pay for dental treatment or the man whose central heating breaks down and he can't afford to have it mended?

Here is a good question – "in spending money am I behaving as though I owned it, or as though I am managing it for God?"^{vi}

ⁱ Christians Against Poverty.

ⁱⁱ Luke 6:24 NIV

ⁱⁱⁱ Luke 16:19-31

^{iv} Luke 12:16-21

^v 1 Timothy 6:10 NIV

^{vi} Sermons on Several Occasions by The Reverend John Wesley M.A. Translated into Modern English by James D Holway