

## Genesis 14:18-24 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-12

Our theme today and both our readings are about giving - but I took a little detour first to delve deeper and find out about King Melchizedek who appears in our Genesis reading.

He steps into the Bible briefly - but why was he introduced - we know nothing is included by accident. I have found that he is described as a **foreshadowing of Jesus** – bear with me and I'll share what I found out.

He's described as a King and a Priest. Now doesn't that remind us of someone?

He's mentioned again in Hebrews where it tells us that Melchizedek's name means King of Righteousness or King of Peace. Again titles we've heard Jesus given.

The King shares bread and wine with Abram – another similarity - Jesus shares this with his disciples and we do this each week at communion – then the King blesses Abram.

It also tells us that as there is no information at all about King Melchizedek's genealogy - when he was born or when he died - that he resembles the Son of God as he remains a priest forever.

Now in Moses time it was established that to be a priest depended entirely on one's genealogy – they had to be from the Levitical tribe from the line of Aaron. As priests were not permitted to work, the law was that they instead collected one tenth of what their people had as an offering to support their work. But we come across this passage in Genesis way before Moses time, before the Levitical priesthood had been established.

Abram, is returning from battle, where he rescued his kidnapped nephew Lot from a coalition of 4 Mesopotamian kings, and Abram willingly gives King Melchizedek one tenth of his spoils. Abram recognised and understood the high office that this priest represented and gave as a way of offering to God as thanks for his situation.

The writer of Hebrews is showing it's Jewish audience that Jesus can be the High Priest of God without coming from the priestly tribe of the Levites – the priesthood actually existed long before Levi! It concludes that Jesus is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. Do have a look at Hebrews chapters 6 and 7 for yourselves.

Now back on topic.

Throughout the Old Testament those coming to worship brought something with them – they brought sacrifices. Now thankfully we don't need to bring sacrifices anymore as Jesus was the full and perfect atonement for all our sins. But we bring our offerings or tithes to our church - which is God's church doing his work.

Now giving and what to give is a very sensitive and personal subject and people can so easily be offended – however Jesus often talked about money – I have found

reference to the fact that 16 of his 38 parables deal with how to handle money and possessions. You will be extremely relieved to hear that I haven't gone down that rabbit hole and I won't now be going through all those examples – but do have a look into this for yourselves!

The key to giving is set out so clearly in our Corinthians reading “each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”. The key is to give what we believe God would like us to give - not out of duty or pressure. It is a personal matter between ourselves and God – we give to God who in turn is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

And there are no hard and fast rules – Abram gave 10% but remember the widow in Mark 12 – she gave everything. It's not how much we give, but having the right attitude and the right reason.

Remember the little boy with his loaves and fishes - so little to give, but in God's hands his willing gift fed the thousands and the leftover scraps filled twelve baskets. When we give what we can - God can do amazing things with it.

In Acts 20 Jesus himself says “it is more blessed to give than to receive”. And Paul in Philippians viewed the financial support he received as a “fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God”.

But remember it's not just money that we can give – we can also give our time, so many people in our community are lonely and isolated - a friendly word, a short chat, an invitation to coffee or to come along to our Wednesday café can mean so much more than we can ever imagine.

Our giving is our own act of worship to God, remembering the blessings God has poured into our own lives so we can give voluntarily as our hearts are stirred and moved by the grace of God.

Our PCC are the trustees of this church and it is their joint responsibility and duty to ensure that all the money given by each of us is used wisely and appropriately for the good of our community to build up the church here in Sunningdale and ultimately share God's love all around us.

So, thank you Lord for the joy of giving, when we give, things happen within us, we become more gracious, more generous, more relaxed, more open, more loving. Thank you for the generous giving of so many of our church family already. May we, like them, learn to give, for it is more blessed to give than to receive. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

**Carol Elsasser, 17 Nov 24**