

25th September 2021

Sharing

**“We have eaten and had enough, and have plenty left;
for the Lord has blessed his people, so that we have this great store left.”**

Bible, 2 Chronicles 31:10

At the beginning of September, the Prime Minister announced that National Insurance contributions would increase by 1.25% to make more money available for “Covid recovery”, but, more importantly, to increase resources for social care. For many, it’s a controversial decision, given that the government pledged in its recent manifesto *not* to increase taxes. We are living in unprecedented times. Not all the decisions a government makes will meet with universal approval. This is one of those. I have little time for Tory policies, and less time for the current government. But I do want to raise an issue today that will place me on the government’s side – or at least offer a perspective that might help in justifying their decision.

In the second book Chronicles, as the story of the Children of Israel and their dealings with God continues to unfold, we find the nation at peace, in a period of relative prosperity. So the people bring “tithes and offerings” to lay before their Lord, as a sign of gratitude and a symbol of the sharing of their plenty. It takes them several months to bring their gifts, which they pile up in heaps. When Hezekiah, the thirteenth king of Judah, and his royal entourage come to see this, they’re astonished at how big the heaps are. So the king questions the priests and Levites about this, in effect seeking advice as to what he should do. And Azariah, the Chief Priest, replies with the quote above. We’ve eaten enough, he says, and we have plenty left. “The Lord has blessed his people”, and they have all this left over. Shouldn’t it be shared, to make sure everyone benefits?

This is Harvest Season. Tomorrow is a “National Day of Giving” in the Church of Scotland. So, is this not worth thinking about? Covid or no Covid, we too have lived for many decades in peace and relative prosperity. Most of us have eaten well, and “we have this great store left”. If we heaped it up, we would be astonished, as Hezekiah was, at how much is available when we’ve had our fill. Isn’t it time we looked at our heaps of plenty and took the decision to share it around some more?

A prayer for today

Me: Tithes and offerings, Lord? Goodness, that’s a lot!

God: “But, my child, when you have such a lot, do you not need to share it?”