St Martin's Money Month

Week 1: Who is your God?

Matthew 6.19-33

 Today is the first Sunday in our St Martin's Money Month.

 And well done for being here in church! You are the brave ones who have not found any excuse you can to be somewhere else: visiting granny, doing the shopping, hiding under the covers!

 Now, given that you have made the effort to be here, I'm going to be honest with you.

 This church needs your money.

 God has called us to build his kingdom in this parish. That costs money.

 No one else is going to pay for God's work here except us.

 During the course of our money month we'll take a look at the church finances and ask each church member, you, to consider whether you can give any more to help pay for everything we believe God is calling us to do!

 Not everyone will be able to give more. That's fine.

 But some of us will be able too. And as we do, we'll be able to help the work of the kingdom in this place.

 Now, having got the bit about church finances out of the way, I want to tell you why I think it's really important that we spend a bit of time thinking about money...

 And why I'm really excited about this Money Month.

Number 1:

 The right use of money is absolutely crucial to our spiritual well-being.

 Why would Jesus have spoken so much about money if he didn't think it was important to our souls?

 As we deal with the subject of money there is the real potential for spiritual growth in our lives.

 I long to see us, as a church, grow numerically.

 but I also long to see us grow spiritually.

 And I believe there is the potential for that this month.

Number 2:

 Money has the ability to cause much anxiety.

 People with lots worry about losing it.

 People with little worry about how to get more.

 Christians feel guilty about spending money on themselves when there are people starving.

 The devil uses money to rob us of the peace and joy that God would have us enjoy.

 This month has the potential for people to be freed from guilt and anxiety and set free to live in peace.

 Wouldn't it be great if we can discover God's will for us in this whole area of money; and live in it? Wouldn't it be great to be set free from anxiety and guilt?

 So, I wanted to come to my topic for this morning:

 "Who is your God?"

 So, what is a god?

 Something/one you worship - ie live for?

 Something/one in whom you put your trust? The place where you find your security.

 If this is what a god is, then it's very clear that for many people money is their god.

 They live for (worship) money.

 They put their trust in money, trying to find their security in what they manage to save up.

 And if money is their god, then God cannot be.

 Look at Jesus' words in Matthew 6.24, from today's reading:

 *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

 For a god to be truly a god then it must be the number one in your life.

 And there cannot be two number ones!

 For a god to be truly a god then it must be the one in whom we find our security; our hope; our reason for living.

 And there cannot be two places where we find this.

 Now I suppose that pretty much anything can become a god; or as the bible calls any god other than the living God; an idol.

 Food might become an idol. in Philippians 3.18-20 St Paul speaks of those living as enemies of Christ, whose god is their belly.

 They are living to satisfy their culinary needs and desires. When they want to feel good about themselves, or to numb their pain, or calm

their fears, they turn to the chocolate biscuits.

 Sex can become a god; an idol...work...family.

 But the bible seems to suggest that money is particularly dangerous.

 Again, St Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, a young Christian leader, writes:

 *"Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into destruction. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6.9-10)*

 Jesus himself warned that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than a camel to enter the eye of a needle!

 Why is this?

 Might it not be that money offers us independence?

 Money says to us - if you have me, you are safe. You can feed yourself and cloth yourself and put a roof over your head. You can insure your house and possessions and even your health.

 Money says to us - if you have me, you can have what you want. You can own the best of everything.

 Money says to us - if you have me, you can do what you want. You can have the best holidays, and go watch ballet or football. You can enjoy yourself.

 Money says to us - if you have me, you need not be beholden to anyone. You are free.

 Money says to us - if you have me, you can be happy!

 Of course it's a lie!

 And we know it!

 Money might promise and even deliver these things for a time.

 But stock market crashes and bank failures can decimate even the largest portfolios.

 But no amount of health insurance can prevent us getting ill.

 There is no amount of money we can give in exchange for our lives, as the rich fool in Jesus' parable found out.

 But of course, the good news is that if money is deceptive, promising much but delivering little, then God isn't.

 Back to Jesus' words in our reading this morning:

*"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow, or reap, or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they" Matthew 6.26*

And look at the lilies of the field says Jesus:

*"Not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If this is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today but tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more cloth you?"*

 You know, I often wonder just what Jesus meant when he said that we must become little children in order to inherit the kingdom of God.

 Perhaps in part he meant that we need to trust God to look after us as a child trusts their parents to look after them.

 Children do not worry about the things they need.

 They simply expect their parents to provide.

 They have faith and trust.

 And so they are free to get on being children unencumbered by the worries of their parents.

 God is our loving heavenly Father.

 He can be trusted to provide for us.

 It is in him that we find our security.

 It is in him that we find our purpose.

 It is in him that we find joy.

 So, who is our god? - money, or the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

 How do we know?

 Perhaps one good question to ask ourselves is this:

 Would anyone know that I am a Christian by the way I handle money?

 In practice, is the way I handle money any different from my neighbour next door; who says,

 *"What shall we eat?" or "what shall we drink?" or "what shall we wear?"*

 If it is, then we are on the right track.

 If we are not, then perhaps there is more for us to learn; that we might be free from the love of money; free to love God; and free to live in the peace and joy that living God's way brings.

 Come back next week to find out more!