

These notes are to help you prepare a sermon for this year's Tax Justice Sunday. You can find lots of other resources on the CHURCH ACTION FOR TAX JUSTICE website:

<http://www.catj.org.uk/>

This is not a sermon outline, because what you say will depend on you as a Preacher and the kind of congregation you are addressing. It assumes you will be following the Common Worship Lectionary, Proper 9 for this year, and Track 2. The texts are printed below.

Where should you start?

One possibility is the Collect and its prayer that "we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God". Echoing St Paul in Romans 8, it assumes that human freedom isn't just an individual matter but something about the whole of God's creation, about ecology – you might touch on environmental taxes later on – and about human society: how are we building the kind of world in which everyone can belong and can be free? That belief in God as the One who liberates his people is also there in the Psalm, celebrating how God freed the people from slavery in Egypt and through the Red Sea to the Promised Land.

Another possibility would be to pick up what the prophet Isaiah says about Prosperity. God wants his people to flourish and to enjoy the good things of life. In that sense our religion is very materialistic – hearts that rejoice and bodies that flourish. But what happens when that wealth is not shared, when some live in great affluence and others have little share in this prosperity? If God is like a mother, nursing her children, does she not notice when some of them go unfed and left behind?

Where might you go from here? The Gospel is about the coming in of the Kingdom of God. How might we recognize that the Kingdom has "come near"? This passage is from the Gospel of Luke, and you might go back to the beginning of Jesus' ministry (4: 16-19) to understand what kind of Kingdom he is bringing. In that first "sermon" he says that he is fulfilling what Isaiah said, "to proclaim good news to the poor... to set a liberty those who are oppressed".

So we come to the Epistle. We are enjoined to "Bear one another's burdens". We are not isolated individuals but part of each other, and so responsible for each other. And then, "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith." Other versions translate "for the good of all" as "for the common good",

What has this to do with Tax? Let's be honest, none of us like paying tax, and in the Bible tax-collectors get a bad press because they worked for the occupying power (the Romans) and were thought unclean by the religious people (the Jews). But today paying tax is one of the most important ways in which we contribute to building the kind of society which we believe God wants us to create. Tax provides the resources for schools and hospitals, and to supplement the income of those who are poor (what we call Benefits), and to help poorer people around the world through International Development. Tax also helps us slow down the growing inequality in society.

But if Tax is about increasing social justice, how we collect tax also needs to be just. And sadly that's not how it is. Often richer people can dodge paying their due. And companies find ways of avoiding what they should pay. There's lots about this on the CATJ website.

Proper 9, Track 2

Old Testament

Isaiah 66:10-14

Thus says the Lord:

"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,
all you who love her;
rejoice with her in joy,
all you who mourn over her--
that you may nurse and be satisfied
from her consoling breast;
that you may drink deeply with delight
from her glorious bosom.

For thus says the LORD:

I will extend prosperity to her like a river,
and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream;
and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm,
and dandled on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child,
so I will comfort you;
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;
your bodies shall flourish like the grass;

and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants,
and his indignation is against his enemies."

The Psalm

Psalm 66:1-8

- 1 Be joyful in God, all you lands; *
sing the glory of his Name;
sing the glory of his praise.
- 2 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! *
because of your great strength your enemies cringe before you.
- 3 All the earth bows down before you, *
sings to you, sings out your Name."
- 4 Come now and see the works of God, *
how wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.
- 5 He turned the sea into dry land,
so that they went through the water on foot, *
and there we rejoiced in him.
- 6 In his might he rules for ever;
his eyes keep watch over the nations; *
let no rebel rise up against him.
- 7 Bless our God, you peoples; *
make the voice of his praise to be heard;
- 8 Who holds our souls in life, *
and will not allow our feet to slip.

The Epistle

Galatians 6: 1-16

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbour's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised-- only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule-- peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

The Gospel

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

The Collect Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen