Sermon: **Each should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** (2 Corinthians 9.7, adapted)

Adverts on TV: some pull heartstrings & beg for money. Cold callers (whether on the phone or at the door) & charity collectors outside supermarkets.
All rely on a degree of guilt – how could you possibly be so heartless as *not* to give?!
Of course, those who *receive* do not care who gave or what their motive was. But it *does* matter to the *giver*.

Giving is a touchy subject, esp in a church.

[1] It seems to be far removed from the spiritual.

[2] It merely feathers the nest of the one asking – me! So in talking about giving I have to be careful!

Context – the poor Jerusalem Church, Paul’s desire to encourage gentile churches (partly to get recognition from Jewish Christians); places like Philippi & Thessalonica had agreed to give partly because Corinth had already agreed. So is Paul bullying Corinth – this is where we begin to feel uncomfortable, knowing contemporary equivalents. Is he, though?

[a] they said they were willing to give

[b] their unwillingness *now* would reflect badly on them and on Paul.

What of our situation? TEXT.

A) Recognise that giving is not just about giving to the church; eg today’s retiring collection for the Interchurch Hospital Chaplaincy. Nor is giving solely about money.

B) Begin with a tithe (tenth of ‘after tax’ income). NB that amount may change drastically according to circumstances. How does this compare with what you *actually* give?

C) Decide in advance, assessing the need. Having done so, the actual giving can take a different mood.

D) Mood of giving is important – no reluctance, no compulsion. Cheerfully! Joyfully!

E) In the end no one knows what you can afford, only you will know if you are being generous or mean.

But is this a religious activity? Paul thinks so TEXT. Jesus thinks so – widow and her mite (Luke 21.1-4); Jesus giving of himself on the cross. NB giving makes you feel like God, who gave all in creation, and in whose image we are made. That is why **God loves a cheerful giver** – *we become what God made us for*. TEXT.