

Reputation!

Isaiah 45¹⁻⁷ Psalm 96¹⁻⁹; 1 Thessalonians 1¹⁻¹⁰; Matthew 22¹⁵⁻²²

*In every place ... your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak of it.
(1 Thessalonians 1⁸)*

The Gospel hints at the reputation the Church has for always trying to get people's money!

The truth - that the Church doesn't get any money from Government or from the Church of England - isn't accepted: so many think that the Church has limitless wealth and that the state looks after the buildings. We only have what is given to us - what comes in through the offering or more substantially in legacies is all we have and no-one will rescue us if we get it wrong.

The divide between the things that belong to God and the things that belong to the emperor still holds fast!

So how does the Church get such a good reputation - of faith in God; of forgiveness through Jesus; of a life lived in hope; and a love for one another that is practical and tangible?

It is fairly simple really - we need people to **imitate!** Are you that person?

This week we watched Dr Martin. A friend of one of the script writers attended a wedding I officiated at and I heard the preacher says, 'The price of a pint for the Church' - which is something I had said at every wedding. Imitation is the best form of flattery! I won't hold my breath for the royalties!

- ✦ For those who are older people in the Church, don't sit back and think that there's nothing you can do!
 - ✦ You need to be the people who show those who are younger how vital faith has been to you.
 - ✦ You have the wisdom of the years and the experience of surviving in the strength God gives that needs to be passed on.

- ✦ Many of us have cause for thanks for grandparents who prayed for us and with us - and at no time in history has there been a greater need for families to know they are hugged in prayer.
- ✦ Those of us who are in the full-flow of life with all its challenges and opportunities need to become people to be intimidated by showing how to balance all the demands placed on us and how God always comes first.
 - ✦ We need to show how integrity in work and at home flows from our relationship we Christ as we become more like him.
 - ✦ We need to show in our family life that the call of God (as Isaiah says) is consistent.
 - ✦ We need to show in our worship (as in the Psalm) that we are open to God and that his holiness makes a difference to us.
- ✦ Those who are young need to show us an energy that we can intimidate.
 - ✦ I remember how easy decisions were when the world was black and white in clear-cut decision making, Those of us who have lived too long and need to excuse our own actions by blurring the edges of morality need to imitate such clear thinking.
 - ✦ I know the passion that there is to share their faith - It is always easier to cool down a fanatic than warm up a corpse.

Our reputation needs to be built on the simple fact that, in the Church and everywhere else, it is now and always all about Jesus.

Our reputation is enhanced when we love each other enough to imitate the best in each other and, that in this community, there isn't one person whom we don't respect and who we want to imitate.

In doing this we give to God the things that are God's - and everyone else looks on enviously!