

# There's more to life than death and taxes

By REV. TOM BANDY  
St. Andrew's United Church

It's an old saying: "The only sure things in life are death and taxes." It is an old saying, but certainly not a Christian one. Easter has let it be known that death is not at all the "sure thing" everybody thought it was. In fact, the last word of God for the world is "Life" rather than "Death." And what about taxes? Does the Faith have anything to say about that?

This spring, the first topic of conversation among friends at the barber shop, aside from the crazy weather, is money. Perhaps the controversy over the federal budget, and the expected difficulties of the provincial budget, has many people worried. Making financial "ends" meet for many families in Georgetown will be a

real challenge in the months ahead. Making financial "ends" meet for poorer families in Ontario, including single parents and seniors, may be downright impossible.

- We all know there are two ways to respond to financial crisis. One is to panic, and we see a lot of that. Irrational cutbacks here, and irrational extravagance there. The other alternative is to prioritize: clarify exactly what is most important in your life which you will support with your dollars. One thing we need to recognize is that Christians are apt to prioritize their financial concerns differently than others in society.

Christians tend to seek a simpler, less ostentatious lifestyle. They tend to emphasize the things of real physical, mental, emo-

tional, and relational health for themselves, their families, and their community. And they tend to DE-emphasize those things which are merely pleasureable.

More than this, Christians tend to be as much concerned about others in society as themselves. They tend to be more willing to spend money on others out of sheer compassion and generosity. Christians know that there are many intangible things which are more important in life than the myriad expensive possessions with which so many middle class people surround themselves.

To put it simply, Christians are aware of their calling to follow Christ. They are aware that Christ had only one pair of sandals, a single change of clothes, and a somewhat smelly donkey for

transportation. The purpose in life for Jesus was not to acquire financial security, but to risk promoting God's realm of love and justice.

No doubt many questions might be addressed to governments about their moral assumptions and ethical commitments when they make financial priorities. My concern here is about our moral assumptions. What priorities will have your financial support in the challenging months ahead?

I think the church might be one. Every charitable institution has its problems, but the church is still your best bet to bring more help, to more people, in more ways, with more kindness, than any other social institution. It can also bring you more satisfaction, more spiritual growth, and more deep-down contentment than any other

human organization. So if you are trimming your family spending, I suggest you cut down on lottery tickets and double your church pledge. It's a better investment.

I think other priorities which will be given serious attention by Christians include many other charities and social services which have been hurt by federal and provincial budgeting. Christians are smart enough to know the long term benefits of eliminating deficits; but, unlike many in society, they are compassionate enough to help those who are suffering today and can't afford to wait for the deficit to be reduced.

Probably the same fellow who invented the saying about death and taxes, also invented that other un-Christian saying, "Charity begins at home." For Jesus, charity began with outcasts and strangers. It was responsibility that began at home.

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