

Sunday 24 September 2023

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity



Rainbow grapes

Sermon © Pete Haslam.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [God is our strength](#)

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Therefore, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers
of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
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.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jonah

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up and over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' Then the Lord said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

Jonah 3:10—end of 4

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians

To me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Philippians 1:21—end

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Parce mihi, Domine

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All **Glory to you O Lord**

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

Matthew 20:1-16

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Be honest. When you heard the Gospel reading of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard just now, did your heart leap for joy? Were you thrilled when you heard that the workers who'd toiled and slaved all day long in the hot sun were going to get the same day's wages as those who'd worked only one hour? I think not! Let's face it, this is not one of Jesus' more popular parables. It's the parable most everyone loves to question. And for good reason! The parable runs against the grain of one of our most deeply cherished values, the value of hard work and just reward: The more you work and the more productive you are, the more you

ought to get paid. I don't know many who would disagree with that. And this is the complaint of those who worked all day: 'You have made them equal to us.'

The parable provokes one of the most primitive cries of childhood, and I am sure that amongst all the parents here this morning you might have witnessed this situation more than once. When one sibling gets a better deal than another, the one who feels cheated screams: 'But that's not fair!' And so it goes on and on: some seem to get more than they deserve while others get less. It's just not right. But before we dismiss this parable and put it back on the shelf marked, 'Bible passages not to be taken seriously,' let's consider the possibility that there's a lesson to be learned here, and that what's going on in this parable is nothing less than a battle between human justice and God's justice—a battle between our will and God's will – and that, even though we say we just want to get what we deserve, what we most want and need is something far greater. And this is what I hope we will get out of the sermon today, that when the love of God reigns in our hearts, we're brought into community with each other, and we experience the fullness of life, not as compensation, but as a gift of grace.

Listen to the parable once more: A landowner hired workers early in the morning and promised to pay them what amounted to minimum wage—one denarius. This was considered the basic subsistence for a man to feed his family for a day. The landowner then went back at nine o'clock, at noon, at three o'clock and at five o'clock and hired more workers. He told them simply that he'd pay them what was right.

So far, so good. In our minds, we've already got it figured out – they're going to get a pro rata share of one denarius. According to our standards, that'd be fair. At the end of the day the landowner had all the workers line up starting with those who came at five o'clock. Lo and behold, he paid them a denarius, a full day's wage. Still, no problem. If he paid one denarius for one hour's work, then he must be going to pay one denarius per hour. That'd be generous, but fair. This is where the parable takes an unexpected turn, for as the workers filed by to receive their wages, he paid them all the same—one denarius each, no matter how long they worked.

'Hey, that's not fair!' they complained. The landowner was not playing by their rules.

Never mind that they got precisely what they were promised; the fact that the others got the same was a pill too big to swallow. The landowner replied, 'Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous? Take your pay and go home.'

What was it about those workers who'd worked all day that made them so angry when the others got paid the same? The first problem was the fact that they were obviously working for the pay and not out of a sense of purpose or pleasure. And

this is a good question we'd do well to ask ourselves: 'What is it that motivates us to do what we do?' Whether we are employed full-time or serve as a volunteer, whether we work in the community or around the house, what motivates us to do what you do? If it's money or recognition or the praise of others, be careful! Most jobs don't pay enough to satisfy a healthy ego. If what we're doing isn't self-satisfying and self-fulfilling, you're likely to harbour resentment and anger about doing it, and when someone comes along doing the same job and gets paid more, you're likely to feel as resentful as the workers in the parable. Only as you truly enjoy what you're doing will you be able not to look over your shoulder and compare your situation with others.

When you're in the right vocation and you've got the right spirit, then the longer you work the better. God's justice arises out of a gracious invitation to use your innate gifts and abilities to the glory of God and to the benefit of others. In the long run, money or recognition or praise has little to do with it.

A second problem with the disgruntled workers in the parable is that they lacked a healthy sense of gratitude. Think about it. Have you ever been out of work? Have you ever applied for a job and gotten turned down? Can you remember how grateful you were when you got a call or a letter offering you a job? Well, what happens to that feeling of gratitude once you're on the job for a while and the new wears off? Isn't that when we begin to complain and find fault? Those who are grateful to be employed have little to complain about. It's when gratitude gives way to the routine that we become disgruntled and begrudge those who seem to have it better.

Can you remember your first job, how thrilled you were to make a few pounds, to receive a pay packet, to have money of your own? I worked a paper round from our local newsagent. I got paid £2.50 for getting up at six o'clock 6 mornings a week. I'll never forget that first day, coming home with £2.50 in my pocket. I was on top of the world. I could hardly wait to go back the next day. Never mind the fact that I had carried a heavy paper bag for around an hour. It was my money, and I was proud of it. Well, what happens to that sense of excitement as time goes by? If you're not careful, you'll lose your enthusiasm and start to see your work, not a chance to be fulfilled and get ahead, but as a necessary evil to be endured. The more we're grateful for the opportunity to serve and contribute and work, the less concerned we're likely to be over working conditions or fringe benefits. And something else about gratitude: It keeps you humble when you stop to consider those less fortunate. You may know the old adage: 'I complained because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.' The same holds true for every level of

work. Are you able to clean your house or mow the lawn? Are you able to buy your groceries and pay your bills? There are those who are not able to do any of these things. The more you consider how blessed you are, the more you're able to look upon those less fortunate with compassion instead of resentment.

This brings up an interesting aspect of the parable to consider, that, perhaps, those who were hired to work at five o'clock had been left standing idle all day, not because they didn't want to work or didn't try to get a job, but because they were the least fit to work. There are plenty of films or documentaries that show what life was like during the great depression of 1929–1932. Folks in need of day labour would drive by and pick up the men they needed. Invariably, the younger, stronger, more aggressive men would hire out first. They'd run up to the cars and pickups in the street before they came to a full stop. The older men couldn't compete. By mid-morning, all that was left milling around were the undesirables—those who were too old, too frail, too crippled or too mentally incompetent to hire out. In the parable, God's justice is that everyone got to work, and everyone was given the essential earnings to feed his family. The inequity of their varying hours of work was offset by the inequity of their varying strengths and abilities. And this is God's justice, not that we get what we deserve, but that we get what we need.

Finally, the problem with the workers who complained the loudest is that they failed to recognise their relationship to each other. Or, to put it another way, the offense of God's justice is softened when the 'all day' workers and the 'eleventh hour' workers stop seeing each other as 'us and them' and start seeing each other as 'we'.

God's justice arises out of a sense of community in which we see the 'eleventh hour' workers as our brothers and sisters whose needs are every bit as important as our own. Next time when someone else gets more than he/she deserves, ask yourself, 'What does this say about my relationship to this person? Would I feel the same if this were my brother or sister or father or mother?' Well, I suppose when it's all said and done, we'll always feel a little squeamish about the inequities of life—the unfairness of it all—and perhaps we'll continue to harbour a little resentment toward those who seem to get a free ride. Let's just say it's because we're human, not God. Even so, let's trust God to be just in spite of our humanness, so that when the day comes when we're all falling short, as one day it surely will, there'll be grace for us as well.

Amen.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

These prayers are inspired by the parable of the vineyard, in today's Gospel reading.

Loving Lord God, give us the grace to believe, follow, and obey you.

Loving God, we pray for those who are trying to earn their salvation through works and rules. Help them to live by grace.

Give us grace to believe:

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, we pray for those who work too hard—the poor and deprived, those who are enslaved, and those with addictions and disorders of the personality.

Give us grace to believe:

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, we pray for those with wealth from whichever source. Inspire them to use it for the common good, and for the welfare of their workers.

Give us grace to believe:

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, the workers in the vineyard laboured though the heat of the day. We pray for those who counter climate change and its effects.

Give us grace to believe:

All Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, Jesus chose to talk of 'the vineyard' in the parable as a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. We pray for those who work to further your Kingdom.

Give us grace to believe:

All Hear our prayer.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.

Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.

Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Amazing grace

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God the Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Grace alone

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,**
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Lead us not into temptation
 but deliver us from evil.

 For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours
 now and for ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,**
 because we all share in one bread.

All **Lamb of God,**
 you take away the sin of the world,
 have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
 you take away the sin of the world,
 have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
 you take away the sin of the world,
 grant us peace.

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Keep, O Lord, your Church, with your perpetual mercy;
and, because without you our human frailty cannot but fall,
keep us ever by your help from all things hurtful,
and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.