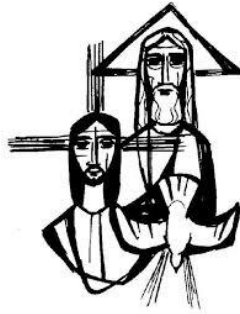


Our Sunday Service Together

8th October 2023

18th Sunday after Trinity



An Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
one God, who was, and who is, and who is to come, the Almighty.

Alleluia

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's
holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to
you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us
our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his
kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. Amen.

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 80.7-15

You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

Turn us again, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.

You made room around it, and when it had taken root, it filled the land.

The hills were covered with its shadow and the cedars of God by its boughs.

It stretched out its branches to the Sea and its tendrils to the River.

Why then have you broken down its wall, so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?

The wild boar out of the wood tears it off, and all the insects of the field devour it.

Turn again, O God of hosts, look down from heaven and behold;

Cherish this vine which your right hand has planted, and the branch that you made so strong for yourself.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Philippians 3.4b-14

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷ Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

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 Gospel Matthew 21.33-46

³³ Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴ When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." ³⁹ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' ⁴¹ They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.'

⁴² Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes"?

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. ⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

This is the third week of 'parables' about a vineyard Matthew has included for us in chapter 21 of his gospel.

Through all of this time and parable telling there is a constant question directed to Jesus, 'who do you think you are and who gives you the right to say these things?'. Today Jesus tells all!

The wicked tenants of a vineyard, given the task to 'work' that property and produce fruitfulness for the land-owner repeatedly act for their own benefit and glory. They have beaten and chased off all the people sent by the land-owner and continue to do it their way. Now the opportunity to 'have it all' comes to them through the last emissary, the land-owner's son. Get rid of him and there is no-one to inherit the vineyard when the land-owner dies (remember you could not sell land in Israel, only rent it out for a time) – all would be theirs for the taking!

Land-owner and vineyard are obvious code for God and Israel. The property is defined, fenced in, bounded by the Law which is to define God's people before the world. The prophets have spoken again and again over the years about the failure to maintain the distinction, to let the land fall to rack and ruin through rebellion, now they feature in Jesus parable – with a blunt 'they came and you ignored and beat them'.

But now the twist comes – the son is sent. And the plot is hatched – or will be after this time in Matthew's gospel – to kill the son. The present tenants, the Jerusalem regime of chief priests (those born as Levites to glorify God in prospering the land and its people) know that the Messiah will strip them of everything and give it to others who will work the land correctly.

The twist comes in Jesus challenge to the leaders, 'have you not read the scriptures?' The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. In Hebrew the word for stone is 'eben' and for son it is 'ben'. Those who

should be building for God's people and for God's glory are so bad at their work they even reject the foundation of everything, God, and they show this in not seeing the 'son of God' before them; the gift on which to build everything.

Paul has come to see this plainly. He has seen that all his religious credentials are nothing in the light of discovering the 'son', the 'stone'. He therefore clings to this stone, makes 'Christ the sure foundation', stripping all other things from his gaze.

'Christ alone' is his mantra and his calling to the church. Do not lose sight of Christ in your Christianity! The people of Israel were born into a purpose, to tend the vineyard, to ensure all could come and know their daily bread and God's grace and justice. Self-interest and 'religion' had clouded their vision and impacted on their living – they could not see the foundation of everything before them.

Paul reminds the followers of Jesus they too are born through baptism into a lifelong work of revealing the welcome of God to all in his 'vineyard', his kingdom, and of nurturing grace, justice, peace and love. Make 'Christ' your foundation, Paul says to the church! As Jesus was born to be Christ for us, so we who follow are called to found our lives on him.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

Father, may we show your love and your salvation in our lives, that the church may order its priorities, that it may grow in holiness and in outreach.

Spirit of God, guide us and strengthen us.

We pray for all who hunger for goodness and righteousness, for all who serve you by serving others. We pray for world leaders, for all who influence our future, for those who work in the press or broadcasting, for artists, musicians and writers, for those who seek to care for and improve the environment.

Spirit of God, guide us and strengthen us.

May your church set an example by the way we live. We seek forgiveness for past transgressions, for the support of fallen and corrupt government systems, rather than offering challenge to the. For times when your church has enabled abuse, racism, inequality or violence within the world. We pray for healing, for redemption and for good relationships and honest dealing.

Spirit of God, guide us and strengthen us.

We pray for all who are weak, for the weak willed and weak minded, for all led into crime or vice. We give thanks for and pray for those working for the rehabilitation of addicts or criminals.

Spirit of God, guide us and strengthen us.

We remember those who are anxious at this time for their work, their health, their homes or communities. We pray for those depressed or despairing, for all who have lost vision or hope. For the sick, for those facing tests or operations; especially Juliet, Elaine, Shirley. We also pray for all who minister to the sick, the elderly and those in care.

Spirit of God, guide us and strengthen us.

We entrust to your power our friends and loved ones in this world, and those who have departed from our sight. We pray that we may all at the last share in the joy and peace of your kingdom.

Spirit of God, guide us and strengthen us.

Amen.

The Collect

All: Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us your gift of faith that, forsaking what lies behind and reaching out to that which is before, we may run the way of your commandments and win the crown of everlasting joy; 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.

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen