Video Service 27th September 2020​ Proper 21A Trinity 16

In the name of the Father,​
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.​  **Amen.**​

Welcome in the name of Christ to this time of worship together. God’s grace, mercy and peace be with you.

We live in a time where uncertainty stalks our lives, unable to travel very far, unable to organise events at church and sometimes we struggle. In our desire to re-imagine church, it is good to remind ourselves that God is present, he is at work in this world so be of good courage.

**Opening Prayer**

Holy One, you have promised to be with us,

And long ago sent your Spirit to abide among us

and guide us to a future of goodness and hope.

We come seeking your truth, your justice, your kindness.

O God, you are with us today,

let us feel your presence and

welcome you into our lives.

Come and fill these desires of our hearts.

​**Opening Song:** ​ **Jesus Calls Us Here To Meet Him** John Bell

[*https://youtu.be/ModYoPReYYw*](https://youtu.be/ModYoPReYYw)

​

**The Gospel Reading**​

​

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St Matthew

***All***   **Glory to you, O Lord.**​

**Matthew 21.23-32**

**The Authority of Jesus Questioned**

23 When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?’ 24Jesus said to them, ‘I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?’ And they argued with one another, ‘If we say, “From heaven”, he will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” 26But if we say, “Of human origin”, we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.’ 27So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And he said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

**The Parable of the Two Sons**

28 ‘What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, “Son, go and work in the vineyard today.” 29He answered, “I will not”; but later he changed his mind and went. 30The father\* went to the second and said the same; and he answered, “I go, sir”; but he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.​

***All***   **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Homily**​

​

“What do you think?”

In this Bible passage Jesus is asking us to think, and to be honest in our response.

The context of this passage is that it comes just after Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Many people have had the time and opportunity to see Jesus at work, to observe his behaviour, and marvel at his teaching and miracles. As Jesus entered the temple, the religious authorities came to him to sort out an issue that was bothering them.

They knew that he had entered Jerusalem on a donkey, been hailed as the Son of David and fulfilled prophecy; he has turned people out of the temple and healed others in the temple. Is his authority to do these things an authority that God has given him, or has he assumed it for himself?

Jesus’ question in return to the religious leaders revealed their unbelief in John the Baptist’s message. What authorisation did he have? Did he have official recognition of the Jewish leadership, or did he come with the authority of God’s voice, crying in the wilderness? If they admit John’s authority came from God, Jesus will want to know why they did not repent and get baptised. They didn’t dare say that John’s authority was one he took for himself because so many people at this festival had heard God speaking through John, had repented and had been baptised and they feared a hostile response from them.

The religious leaders are put on the spot and employ a face-saving tactic by refusing to answer. In turn, Jesus refuses to answer their initial question about the source of his authority. But then from Jesus comes a rhetorical invitation to reflect on the story he is about to tell them, “What do you think?”

The brief parable that follows challenges the hearts of the chief priests and leaders. Like the first son in the story, the leaders of Israel made all the right noises, and promised to work for God and obey him in his vineyard, but they ***did*** nothing. The second son was rebellious, but afterwards, changed his mind and went to do the father’s work. The second son’s response reminded me of an earlier parable Jesus told in chapter 7:21 where he says that *‘Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of his father.’* The second so, who so graciously agrees to work but then fails to fulfil his commitments, recalls all those who declare loyalty but who display no consistency between words and deeds.

Which was the obedient one? Which did the will of his father?

There was no possibility of avoiding the answer this time, it was obvious.

The tax collectors and prostitutes may not on the surface look much like God’s people, especially when compared to the pious religious authorities, but they are identified with the first son and the religious authorities with the second. The difference is not in appearance but in their respective responses to the message of John. The tax collectors and prostitutes believed the message of John, the religious authorities chose not to see and believe.

What do you think?

Are you like the first son or the second?

Are you open to God’s message, prepared to repent and go and do the Father’s will? Or are you like the second son who agrees to work for the kingdom and then doesn’t do as he is asked, who doesn’t do the Father’s will?

We are all faced with the demand for a transformation in the light of God’s coming reign, for the same reversal experienced by the first son, who changes his mind and obeys. We all need to learn to be obedient to God, nothing else.

​

**Prayers of Intercession**​

Gracious God,

You are a God of compassion and love.

We praise You for Your faithful love toward us.

Because we have known Your love,

we come to You with confidence,

offering our prayers for the world that You love.

We pray for those suffering the effects of recent natural disasters:

for people without food, without water, without shelter, without hope.

for the regions of our world caught up in violence and threats of violence:

for those who live with serious illness, with chronic pain,

   those without access to proper medical care,

   those for whom treatment is no longer an option.

For ourselves as we face answering the question ‘What do you think?’ For honesty in our hearts and the grace to repent and receive forgiveness in order to carry out the will of the Father.

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden,

to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

​**God of mercy,**

**we acknowledge that we are all sinners.**

**We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said**

**and done,**

**and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.**

**For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,**

**forgive us for all that is past,**

**and help us to live each day**

**in the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.**

​May God who loved the world so much

that he sent his Son to be our Saviour

forgive us our sins

and make us holy to serve him in the world,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**​

**The Collect**​ Trinity 16

​

In a time of silence, let us pray that our worship will bring us closer to the one who has created all things.​

Lord of creation,

whose glory is around and within us:

open our eyes to your wonders,

that we may serve you with reverence

and know your peace at our lives’ end,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Merciful God,

You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to show us a different way to live,

the way of deep humility and obedience.

You call us to love one another,

and to work together with one heart and mind.

Give us courage to follow faithfully, and with integrity,

with actions that bear witness to the words we speak,

and worship that overflows into our daily tasks and relationships

so that our lives will bring glory and honour to You,

our Redeemer and Lord. **Amen.**

**The Lord’s Prayer**​

​

As we join our prayers with the Church Universal, so we say, each in our own language, the prayer that Jesus taught us​,

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.

​

**Blessing**

**Notices**

Thank you for continuing to join me for this time of worship, please hold us in your prayers as we re-imagine church, listening to God speaking to us. And of course thank you for your continued financial support 😊

​

**Song: All the people said Amen,** Matt Maher

[**https://youtu.be/T9ifzzMD7zk**](https://youtu.be/T9ifzzMD7zk)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.​

***All***   **In the name of Christ. Amen.**​