Video Service 20th September 2020​ Proper 20A Trinity 15

Hello and welcome in the name of Christ to this time of worship together. God’s grace, mercy and peace be with you. We live in troubled times, so much of what we are used to has been taken away, perhaps permanently, and we struggle with the challenges we face each day. It is timely 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 this morning.

Let us feel your presence and

welcome you into our lives.

Come and fill these desires of our hearts.

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**Opening Song:** ​ **God moves in a mysterious way** *Graham Kendrick*

<https://youtu.be/vCca-8HDiVg>

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**The Gospel Reading**​

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

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

​ **Matthew 20.1-16 The Labourers in the Vineyard**

20‘For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. 2After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage,[\*](javascript:void(0);) he sent them into his vineyard. 3When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; 4and he said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.” So they went. 5When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. 6And 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?” 7They said to him, “Because no one has hired us.” He said to them, “You also go into the vineyard.” 8When 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.” 9When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.[\*](javascript:void(0);) 10Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.[\*](javascript:void(0);) 11And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 12saying, “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.” 13But he replied to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?[\*](javascript:void(0);) 14Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. 15Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?”[\*](javascript:void(0);) 16So the last will be first, and the first will be last.’[\*](javascript:void(0);)

This is the Gospel of the Lord.​

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

**Homily**​

‘For the kingdom of heaven is like….’ Last week we heard about the slave who had been forgiven his impossible debt by the king but wasn’t able to offer the same mercy and compassion to a fellow slave. Forgive as we are forgiven.

Again in the Bible passage we have a parable which begins ‘ the Kingdom of heaven is like…’

What is it to be compared to this week?

To give you a flavour of God’s mercy and grace this week, let me take you on an imaginary journey. Suppose you spend your leisure time participating in a particular sport, or you watch it on tv and find that you can buy tickets for a special game or match? Or there is a music band that you listen to all the time and find they are coming to Lille, to Stade Pierre Mauroy, for a one-off concert? You spend a lot of money and effort to get that all-important ticket and arrive at the venue many months later for the great event.

Imagine, though, this happens. The day comes and all the effort and money to get the precious ticket was worthwhile, you are content and are standing in the queue to get in. And then you get a shock. You realise that the authorities are letting in people before you. People who have not queued, who have just turned up, and they are being allowed to enter the grounds without the inconvenience of waiting. You’re still going to get *your* ticket, of course, but that’s not the point. That’s not fair, you might say. You might even say something a bit stronger.

I expect that’s how some of the workers in the parable felt. That’s not fair. What sort of employer is this? They had toiled all day in the scorching heat, but when it came to collecting their wages, they were put at the back of the queue. Worse still, when it came for them to be paid, they received the same money as those who had done virtually no work.

In this parable we see that God’s grace is both radical and offensive. First there is the relationship between the owner of the vineyard and the labourers who work there all day. In this parable we have a clear and precise picture of what happens at the end of the day. It’s hot, it’s dusty, and picking grapes is back breaking work, as any of us who have done a vendange will testify. The people who have worked the entire day stand and look in amazement as the labourers who arrived to work only a few minutes ago are being paid a full day’s wages. Naturally, they expect to receive more as they have worked all day in the sun. When they receive ‘only’ the agreed wages, they understandably grumble against the landowner.

Secondly there is the relationship between the labourers who work all day, and those who arrive late in the day. They are envious of the generosity shown the others*. ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us (20:12)* Although they got exactly what they had expected, it felt diminished because others also had it.

The all-day workers can’t see the good day’s wages, the well picked vineyard, the joy of the other workers at being able to feed their families, because they are too busy having a huff, too wrapped up in their sense of grievance, too envious of the generosity shown the others. They chose to be bitter and resentful about the generosity of the landowner. It simply was not fair. They are happy to receive grace from the landowner, but resent it being shown to others.

It’s an old story. Resentment by the elder brother who thought his father was a doting fool when his father invited him to join the celebrations at the prodigal’s return. The Pharisee at prayer thanks God that he is not like the sinful publican. Divine grace is a great equalizer which tears away presumed privilege and puts us all on the same level as those we have long opposed, perhaps for their racism or sexism. They too are brothers and sisters to whom God has shown his grace, generosity and compassion.

God’s grace is not about what ***we*** feel is right and fair. The owner of the vineyard has upset our expectations. Upset our merit system. Why bother to work for God over many years, where does it get us?

It gets us exactly what we were promised, God’s love, forgiveness, grace, compassion and the promise of living with him for ever.

We have to let go of our language of justice and rights and remember our covenant relationship with God, remember that we have been forgiven our impossible debt, we have been shown mercy and love and grace. How God chooses to deal with others is none of our business, our work in the owner’s vineyard is to do what is asked of us, and do it because we are loved and forgiven.

**Prayers of Intercession**​

Gracious God,

we have known Your love,

and experienced Your care and provision.

You invite us to extend that love to the world around us—

to care for others as deeply as we care for ourselves.

And so we bring the needs of our world before You now.

For the many who do not have enough:

enough food to eat, or shelter to keep warm;

enough employment, or money to pay their bills;

enough medicine or medical care.

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who have more than enough,

but who still struggle to find meaning and purpose in life;

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all who are sick in body, mind or spirit and for all who care for them; for those who are anxious about someone they love; for those facing their last days, and for those who watch over them.

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For ourselves, for our daily life with all its challenges and opportunities, give us your grace and strength. Help us to help others in your name.

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, Your grace reaches out to all of us.

You call us to live as citizens of heaven,

working together with one heart and mind.

Strengthen us to live in a manner worthy

of the Good News we have received,

offering our lives in service of Your kingdom,

where the last are first, and the first are last,

and there is grace enough for all.

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In this time of pandemic, we hold before you those who suffer, from illness, anxiety, unemployment, fear. We pray for the medical profession and nursing staff in hospitals, laboratories and retirement homes.

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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**Prayers of Penitence**​

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

to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

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**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 usholy to serve him in the world,

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

**The Collect**​ Trinity 15

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Lord God,

defend your Church from all false teaching

and give to your people knowledge of your truth,

that we may enjoy eternal life

in Jesus Christ our Lord.   **Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer**​

The line that stands out for you the most: <https://youtu.be/LSrs1NhAoBk>

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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 Dismissal**​

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*A Blessing*​

Go out from here

as workers in God’s upside-down kingdom,

where the last are first and the first are last,

where needs are met in miraculous ways,

and there is grace enough for all!

And the blessing of God,

the love of Jesus Christ,

and the presence of the Holy Spirit

surround you and sustain you in the coming days.

**Amen.**

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**Notices**​

Online groups, please see our website for details

Once again, we really appreciate your support through prayer and giving, and it makes a big difference to us for our ministry and mission.

​ <https://christchurchlille.fr/about-us/donations/>

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**Hymn Forth, in thy name, I go**

[**https://youtu.be/2ppFnYypfLM**](https://youtu.be/2ppFnYypfLM)