

The Gospel Readings for the Sundays in August

6th September - Trinity 13

Bible Reading: Matthew 18.15-20

‘If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’

Pause for Thought

Which side of this statement from Jesus do you place yourself on? We can very quickly jump to examples of times we have been wronged. When someone has done something or said something to us that is hurtful. This, rightly can't be allowed to happen without the person being confronted. Yet how many of us would jump to Jesus' second point about taking others along with you and miss completely the first step? Perhaps we find it much easier to speak about the person behind their back, with like minded people that we know will be on our side and naturally makes us feel better. But as always Jesus confronts us with a difficult reality. Our first step should be to seek out the person who has caused us grief and speak to them one on one. Jesus even uses the word 'Alone,' which in our safeguarding culture would not sound like wise advice. But in a culture of online trolling, where people can cast abuse from behind a screen and never have to own up to what they've done or how they make others feel. Jesus' words seem all the more poignant. We owe it to each other to try as much as we can to rectify our grievances with our brothers and sisters by speaking with them first and remembering the reconciliation Jesus gives us.

Prayer

Almighty God, you search us and know us: may we rely on you in strength and rest on you in weakness, now and in all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

13th September - Trinity 14

Bible Reading: Matthew 18.21-35

‘For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, “Pay what you owe.” Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.” But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?” And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.’

Pause for Thought

How much do you owe? Jesus’ parables continue to hit the spot over 2000 years after he’s spoken them. So to imagine ourselves stood in front of our ‘King’ and every action and decision we’ve ever taken are placed side by side on a board. One column for the good and one column for the bad. How much will we owe? I can only think of how much longer the ‘bad’ side of my own list would be. Yet our ‘King’ is able to wipe that slate clean, so that what we owe is taken from us and on to him. So how do we see each other? Do we weigh up the good and bad others do and then judge them for it? This parable invites us not to judge as we will be judged, but love as our ‘king’ loves us.

Prayer

Merciful God, your Son came to save us and bore our sins on the cross: may we trust in your mercy and know your love, rejoicing in the righteousness that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

20th September - Trinity 15

Bible Reading: Matthew 20.1-16

‘For 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.’

Pause for Thought

Are you reading this as a Christian? If so when did you give your life to Jesus? When did you accept God and begin to follow Jesus’ teachings? If not, how does it feel to read that if you become a Christian, whenever you become one, you get the same reward as those who spend their entire life following Christ? As Bishop Tom Wright says; “People who work in Church circles can easily assume that they are the special ones, God’s inner circle. In reality, God is out in the marketplace, looking for the people everybody else tried to ignore, welcoming them on the same terms, surprising them (and everyone else) with his generous grace.”

Prayer

Lord God, defend your Church from all false teaching and give to your people knowledge of your truth, that we may enjoy eternal life

27th September - Trinity 16

Bible Reading: Luke 12.16-30

Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?” Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.’ He said to his disciples, ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

Pause for Thought

It is very nice, particularly with the current pandemic around the world, to be told not to worry. Yet it is not an easy thing to do. Worrying, it would seem, is woven into the very fabric of who we are. Yet think to the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve have no worries until after the serpent has led them astray. It is all too easy to let our worries blind us of the joy that is all around us in God’s creation. Let us this week then, not worry about trying to store whatever it is we covet in our barns, but trust God to supply our needs.

Prayer

Creator God, you made the goodness of the sea and the rhythm of the seasons; as we thank you for the harvest, may we cherish and respect this planet and it’s peoples, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

A Short Order of Prayer for Each Day

adapted from the Church of England website

We meet in the presence of God who knows our needs, hears our cries, feels our pain, and heals our wounds.

The Scriptures say, ‘Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.’ (*1 Peter chapter 5 verse 7*)

We keep a moment of silence to reflect on these words (or the Gospel reading for the nearest Sunday) and to gather in all those for whom we would like to pray. You may even like to listen to a piece of music.

Let us pray to God, who makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus, through illness or isolation or anxiety, that they may find relief and recovery:

For those who are guiding our nation at this time, and shaping national policies,
that they may make wise decisions:

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers, that through their skill and insights many will be restored to health:

For those who through their daily work bring help and care to those in need, or help to sustain our common life, that they may be strengthened:

For the vulnerable and the fearful, for the gravely ill and the dying, that they may know your comfort and peace:

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God.

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.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.