



Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity 20th September

Father God, help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 409: Lord for the years

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

Prayer of Preparation

**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**

Prayer of Confession

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." 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.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

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.

**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**

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

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. **Amen**

Gloria

**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.**

Collect:

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; 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**

Old Testament Reading: Jonah 3:10 – 4:1-11

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 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?'

Hymn 161: Father hear the prayer we offer

Gospel Reading: Matthew 20:1-16

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

'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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Revd Petra Shakeshaft

We all know the story of Jonah, or at least the bit about the whale, which actually isn't a whale, but a great fish.

Jonah gets caught up in one of God's almighty storms

when he decides he doesn't want to go and preach to the ungodly Ninevites.

When he sees the Ninevites are not going to get it after all,

he takes himself off outside the city and sits sulking under his booth.

God sends a bush to grow and shade him from the sun, which puts him in a better mood.

But then God sends the worm, the bush is destroyed and Jonah is hopping mad again.

Why should you be angry? asks God.

You did nothing to make the bush grow.

If you're so concerned about a bush which was here today and gone tomorrow,

and for which you did nothing,

why should I not be concerned for the welfare of the hundred and twenty thousand people of Ninevah?

Jonah, of course, would much rather see them receive their just deserts.

Jonah is not insightful enough to see that God wants to save the Ninevites from destruction and that's why he sent Jonah.

Even after being saved from the belly of the fish,

Jonah doesn't realise his own salvation is related to the salvation of the Ninevites.

It's God's will.

Jonah may have gone to Ninevah and preached and been the vehicle of their salvation,

but he's gone under duress – he didn't want to get caught up in another one of God's almighty storms.

His actions may have been right, but his heart was in the wrong place.

He was full of self-righteousness and didn't see why the Ninevites should have God's blessing when they'd done nothing to deserve it.

The parable of the labourers in the vineyard sees a similar attitude.

It's one of those stories in which we perhaps have a lot of sympathy

for the workers who have been sweating and toiling all day long.

There's something about the equal pay of the late arrivals that goes against the grain.

It's just not fair.

What is fair?

Well, one denarius was the amount paid for a day's work – it was a subsistence amount; enough for a man to feed his family for a day.

And so, this is not about what is fair or unfair,

but is about justice – not human justice, but God's justice – kingdom justice.

In God's kingdom the hungry are fed – all of them.

There's a lot in the media at the moment about the furlough scheme, as it begins to come to an end.

Many think it's unfair that people should be paid to stay at home.

We have a 'so-called' welfare system, where, in theory at least, the poorest should have their needs provided for,

but the poor are often labelled scroungers
and many people don't see why they should be able to afford televisions and mobile phones
or other luxury items ...

Why should they get them for nothing when we have to work for them?

Then there are the hapless homeless, the druggies, the prisoners ...

all those wasters the poor tax-payer is shelling out for.

It's not fair.

Well no, it's not.

It's not fair that people are homeless.

It's not fair that people are poor.

It's not fair that some people are paid millions and others the minimum wage.

The vineyard, of course, is the Old Testament metaphor for God's kingdom
and so is based on kingdom justice.

Maybe those latecomers were the lame and crippled, the hapless, elderly and tired;
those who couldn't do, just couldn't do a full day's work, if you paid them.

So the owner of the vineyard pays them.

If our society were based on vineyard principles, on God's justice,
it would look very different.

But how about church?

this is, after all a parable about the people of God.

If church is based on vineyard principles,

we are then, a community of co-workers for the kingdom,

a community of brothers and sisters, and the needs and welfare of every single member
must always be for us, as important as our own.

As Jonah discovers, God sends his messengers and prophets to all sorts of places
not just the community of St Peter's Babraham, or St Marys's Sawston,
not just to the Anglican church, or at least the bit of the church that do things like us ...
or even the Christian church as a whole – Jonah was sent to Ninevah
Ninevah for goodness sake!

A place full of foreigners, gentiles, non-Jews, people who are beyond the pale and should be
destroyed ...

and that's the point of the vineyard ...

The workers who turned up later *are* the non-Jews, the Greeks, the Gentiles;
the people who are not quite like us.

And they too, are equal recipients of God's good grace.

God sent his Son into the world not to condemn, but to show God's love to the world – the whole
world.

We cannot earn God's love.

It doesn't matter if you've served on every committee, if your name appears on every rota
and you've sung like an angel for forty years in the choir.

It doesn't matter if you've just rocked up off the street with your buttons done up wrong,
you can't follow the service and your love life's a mess.

God loves you equally

This scandalous gospel means we should not covet what God has given to someone else or crave another's gifts, but rejoice with them at their good fortune and ours, for we are working together for the kingdom of God; bringing in his fruitful harvest together.

None of us gets where we are simply by our own efforts, others have helped us along the way, let's not begrudge those who have not had the chances we have had. In the end, all of us are rewarded with far more than any of us deserve because God's grace is boundless, endless and paid out to all comers, a good measure, pressed down and overflowing.

A St Peter joke.

A woman goes up to heaven (for a change) and meets St Peter at the gates.

We have a point system now, says St Peter.

Points? says the woman

St. Peter explained, *It's simple. We determine how many points you have by the life you've led.*

We require a hundred points to get in. Tell me about your life, and I'll add up your points.

Well, said the woman, *I taught in Sunday School, was a faithful member of my church for sixty years, became a priest and worked hard for the church.*

Great, said St Peter. *One point.*

Crestfallen, the woman went on, *I was a faithful wife, a good mother to my children, tithed my money to the church, gave to charity and served on lots of committees.*

Very good, said St Peter, *another point.*

The woman sighed. *I'll never make it, she said. The only way I'll get in is by the grace of God.*

Well done! Said St Peter. *98 points. Welcome*

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers

The Peace:

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 379: Lead us Heavenly Father lead us

Lord's Prayer

**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.**

Hymn 227: God of mercy, God of Grace

Remembering the Lord's Supper:

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 195: The Servant King

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact
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