



Broomhill Hyndland
Parish Church

"Lighting the Way"

for **Sunday 20 September 2020**

Dear friends

Welcome to another Sunday service. I'm delighted we are with each other once more, whether by the worship in Naseby, on the screen in the evening, or as you read the Reflections in your own comfy seat, with a wee cup of tea by your side.

I've often wondered when you read them? Jill sends them out on a Friday - do you wait until 10.30am, sit down and have some quiet time waving, in your head, to those who sit round about you? I hope you do, for it makes us more together, remembering and longing at the same time.

Last Sunday, for the first time in 25 services, we had a little 'blip' on the Zoom service, so our usual time together was missed. Everything should be back to normal this Sunday, so even if you are at the Kirk, or reading the Reflections, why don't you switch on at 7pm?

Had you been in Carol's company, she would have been dropping hints that the Newsletter deadline is this Sunday, so if you are wishing to contribute get your skates on!!

Last week Julie and I had some time to chat. You will be pleased to know that on Thursday Julie started her course work at the University - we wish her well in her studies. She also will be placed at Lenzie Old for her attachment in October but remember that Julie will, when time and studies permit, still be with us. As an added bonus Julie will be conducting worship next Sunday whilst my weary brain takes a Sunday off. Look after Julie.

And look after yourselves. And look out for the God who looks after us all.

George

Pentecost 17A Sunday 20 September 20 (Proper 20)

For those who like to follow all the lectionary readings for the Sunday and dip into the Old Testament and Epistles, the readings are Exodus 16: 2-15; Jonah 3: 10-4:11; Psalm 145: 1-8; Philippians 1: 21-30; Matthew 20: 1-16.

Our Sunday reflection will be based both on Exodus and Matthew but please read and ponder the suggested Scripture and see how it connects and what it says to you.

.... read, reflect, rejoice...

CALL

The first shall be last.

We come to worship as we are.

The last shall be first.

We come with confidence.

The first shall be last.

We come with questions.

The last shall be first.

We come burdened by failure.

The first shall be last.

We come celebrating success.

The last shall be first.

We come fearful of the future.

The first shall be last
and the last shall be first
and a little child shall lead them.

INTROIT

For your generous providing
which sustains all our days,
for your Spirit here residing,
we proclaim our heartfelt praise.
Through the depths of joy and sorrow,
though the road be smooth or rough,
fearless, we can face tomorrow
for your grace will be enough.

Hush our world's seductive noises
tempting us to stand alone;
save us from the siren voices
calling us to trust our own.
For those snared by earthly treasure,
lured by false security,
Jesus, true and only measure,
spring the trap to set folk free. (CH4 – 655)

PRAYER

In the times when we give –
(as oppose to the times that we take
and I hear the words, if you take, always give back)
however generously we give it becomes blatantly clear,
O God, how ridiculous our attempts are to balance the scales.
We fail to repay that which we have taken from others
who have given so much of their time and talents,
and we fail to repay your abundance of supply;
your extravagance of grace;
your overwhelming and overflowing love.
Nor do you require it.
So, why should we expect it of others?
In truth, we cannot.
Like you we can only love – by giving, by serving, by praying.

And so we ask...

Free the score-keepers in our world and in our hearts
Free the record keepers of the winners and trophy holders

Restore the fallen in our world and in our hearts
Strengthen the merciful in our world and in our hearts
Heal the broken in our world and in our hearts
Uplift the lowly in our world and in our hearts
Bring down the tyrants in our world and in our hearts
Erase the lines of division in our world and in our hearts
Create a Christ-guided humanity in our world and in our hearts

And use us to make it so.
In Jesus Name we pray
who balanced our living and dying
by his dying and living on and through the Cross.
And in his words we say:-
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 debts as we forgive our debtors.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
forever.
AMEN

SCRIPTURE READINGS

And now we turn to Scripture. Matthew 20: 1-16

Let us listen, read and hear the Word of God ...
... this is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to Him.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Call all the labourers, O God. Call your labourers who woke early, call your labourers who came late, call your labourers who feel wronged, call your labourers who feel overlooked, call your labourers who can't feed their children with this wage, call your labourers who know they are working in your fields, call your labourers who use their wage to increase your love, call all your labourers, O God, tell us to roll up our sleeves. For we know that we have work to do. Let us find you in the work we share here and now, in Christ's presence we pray. AMEN

REFLECTION

It was a mistake... and I should have seen it coming.
It was Harvest Time in the Primary School and my visual aid was a bag of sweets. The plan was to throw sweets to one side of the assembly hall and as I was talking, throw more sweets to the same side to try and get the children to understand the social divide. Every time I threw sweets it was to the same class. A near riot ensued as primary children climbed over others to retrieve a sweet.
Boy was the Heide pleased!!
Whilst the point regarding the inequalities of the world trade was in there some-



where, it was also lost because all the children could understand was that 'It was not fair.'

And they were right – the division between 'the haves' and the 'have-nots' is stark. They were right because life is not fair.

Some people sail through life and when they fall, land back on their feet like a cat: others climb a hill and when they reach what they thought was the summit, find there is much more to climb.

'Life is not fair'. How true this statement is. Even in this current pandemic, those with little resources are hit more than most. This parable, for many, is one of the most irritating. Some like the Prodigal Son, someone wayward returning; others like the Parable of the Lost Sheep and everything put on hold until that sheep is found – but this one, about a landowner, has people scratching their heads.

The story we know – a landowner is seeking workers to tend his vineyard. He heads to the market place where labourers would gather in the hope of some employment. It is a system where the hirer has all the rights and the workers none. As scholars remind us, these workers are at the bottom of the pile, unlike the slaves where there was a personal investment in them. This was not even the minimum wage. It was the lowest rung of the ladder and a life of unpredictability, poverty, malnutrition, disease, and begging bowls.

The owner comes and hires at the beginning of the day.

And throughout the day, I suppose after an assessment of how much he wished to be done, he continues to hire people. Then the day is done and the workers are paid. The labourers hired last are paid the same amount that was agreed by those who were hired first.

There is outrage. 'We have sweated all day in the sun, breaking our backs on a long shift and you've paid those who trundled in at the end in the cool of the evening, the same.' IT IS NOT FAIR.

How would you feel?

Well I can think of stories in churches where a mammoth amount of work is done, say on a Nativity Play and one person, absent a lot, takes the plaudits! It does seem unfair, immoral even, and unjust that everyone, despite their effort, is rewarded the same way. I can think of stories, we all can, of how those who are at the top of the tree earning the big bucks continue to do so and yet those lower down, receive very little in comparison. We have seen it in the banking world, in the world of TV, a 'jobs for the boys' attitude protecting those who are in good positions as opposed to those who feel used, ignored, and under-valued.

Welcome to God's Community! According to Matthew this is what the Kingdom of God is like. But notice in this story, that rather than emphasising and reinforcing the distinctions between people, the boss uses his payment method to express solidarity, unity and commonality.

In Jesus' Parable it comes across that those who work all day have no concerns for those who have no work. Jesus points out that all have needs, why look at others when you are being rewarded yourself.

He evens out the distinctions. Technically no wrong has been done. He has paid the workers at the beginning the agreed wage and, through his choice, has decided to do whatever he wishes with his wealth and give to them equally.

In God's empire, the disciple should always look at social structures from an egalitarian perspective. I don't want to mention football again, but I've tried to say to my son that football in the U.S.A works a better system. The players'

wages are capped. Money is shared out more equally, everyone has the same bite of the cherry – this is not the case in most leagues, in Scotland, England, in France, in Italy – the biggest win because they will always win because the scales are tipped in their favour.

Not so with God.

We've been caught with this dilemma when it comes to Prize-giving. Some children attend every Sunday and gain a prize for their efforts: other children are more erratic but still receive a prize. Which do we encourage: that life is unfair and if you are not committed don't expect a gift – or, everyone gets (but that diminishes the gift of those who attended Sunday by Sunday!)?

When it comes to how we should react, fairness might not be the answer. Our actions are often tainted with self-concern but that's not the way God sees it. God is not fair because he gives out of love. How can we compare to this?

The parable asks us to live in a different way, a different lifestyle where what counts is not the social status we build up; the pecking order we believe exists; ranking by economics or social position.

This pandemic has hit people in different ways – some have done well during it. Some people's investments have risen sharply. Some people have discovered life beyond the daily commute. Some have saved money from the cancellation of holidays. Some have found a niche in the market to make PPE or materials to clean a building. There are even adverts on how to temporarily deal with your own teeth and gums whilst waiting for an appointment in the year dot with your dentist!

Some elderly people thrived, with accessible internet access, supportive families (think of Captain Sir Tom Moore!). Some were in care homes with no visitors, or dying alone of Covid-19 with no access to family.

Is life fair? I don't think so but God calls us to be labourers in the vineyard and to recognise that God seeks us to be a freer, more open society.

Imagine, after a week's work, you look at your pay packet and there is more than you have expected, more than the hours you have worked. Would you go back to your Boss and say, 'You've paid me too much!' 'I think you have made a mistake!'

I praise a God who cannot count and makes a mistake at the end of the month!!

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN

PRAYER

'Come, my son in heir,' my Father used to say
'come my hairy son' he would laugh at his own wit!

But not to me!

To my older brother,
rubbing him on the chin to see if he was a man.

Scenes, I think, of Jacob and Esau

and 'you know that Esau is a hairy man
but I have smooth skin.'

The first shall be last

and the last shall be first is fine in theory

knowing that the inheritance was brother-bound.
Remind me, remind us,
that our worth to you is not decided on the pecking order.
It is not decided by the jockeying for position
nor waiting at the end to be called to the front.
You are generous,
seeking us out in the marketplace
and telling us the marketplace is not our Saviour.
You offer, recognising our needs,
you promise life abundant, even here, even now.
Forgive us, Lord, when we only value others for what they can do,
for you have loved us for who we are and who we are created to be.
When we have grumbled and groaned
you have given more.
When we have trusted the man-made structures
you have shown us the solid ground on which we stand.
'Come my son in heir,'
'Come, my daughter in heir,'
you speak to me,
you speak to us all as heirs to your kingdom
not based on age or shoe size,
not based on first-born,
first off the mark,
first to fly from the nest,
not based on letters after our name,
but our names known and loved by you.

BENEDICTION

May the blessing of the disconcerting God be on us:
the blessings of challenge and change;
the blessings of travel and transition;
the blessings of discovery and deepening;
the blessings of flourishing and fulfilment.
May these blessings of the Kingdom be ours.
Go in Peace,
and may the Blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all.