



# **Worshipping & Praying Together as a community dispersed**

*during the week beginning*

*Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> September*

*The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost*

## **The Parish of Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.**

The worshipping communities of the Cathedral and St Peter's Hamilton.

This readings for the coming weeks are a little longer as we continue our journey through Exodus and the Gospel of Matthew, and as we spend a few weeks reflecting on Paul's letter to the Philippians. Philippians provides us with great insights into what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ through the witness of the Apostle Paul, imprisoned for his faith and preaching the Gospel. Paul's message of hope as we struggle in our discipleship encourages us to keep the faith and finish the race, confident in God's purposes for us and for the world.

The timeliness of the reading of Philippians could not be more perfect as we reflect on 6 months since we went into lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. With the apostles' words of comfort and encouragement in our earthly struggles, whilst we may not be able see an end to this pandemic and all the implications for our lives and livelihoods, and our witness as God's church in this city of Newcastle and Hamilton, we are comforted by the knowledge that God's purposes will be revealed and we will emerge with new possibilities for ourselves and for our Christian communities. We pray for an end to the pandemic and for our Christian witness in this changing and challenging world.

**Our Services of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer are streamed every day and Holy Communion at the Cathedral is streamed on Sundays and Wednesdays:**

**You Tube:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXyas2uhJUNOnDetOpPdUOg>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/christchurchcathedralnewcastle/>

**Eucharists are offered at Christ Church Cathedral on Sundays at 8.00am and 11.00am and Monday to Friday at 8.30am (following Morning Prayer), and at St Peter's Hamilton at 11.00am on Tuesdays and Thursdays.**

*Parish Council are seeking additional volunteers to assist with sides people duties and cleaning in the church after our services. Please contact the Parish Office on 4929 2052.*

**Our family service, Families@Five has returned to the Cathedral at 5.00pm on the first Saturday of each month. Our next Families@Five service will be on Saturday, 3 October.**

**Please encourage family and friends to join with us. All are welcome!**

***Please do not hesitate to contact Dean Katherine or Reverend Angela if you have any concerns at this time and if you would like for us to visit you at home.***

## The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

### **Exodus 16: 2-15**

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?" And Moses said, "When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him - what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord." Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.'" And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'" In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

### **Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45**

- 1 O give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name:  
tell among the peoples what things he has done.
- 2 Sing to him O sing praises:  
and be telling of all his marvellous works.
- 3 Exult in his holy name:  
and let those that seek the Lord be joyful in heart.
- 4 Seek the Lord and his strength:  
O seek his face continually.
- 5 Call to mind what wonders he has done:  
his marvellous acts and the judgements of his mouth.
- 6 O seed of Abraham his servant:  
O children of Jacob his chosen one.
- 37 He brought Israel out with silver and with gold:  
and not one among their tribes was seen to stumble.

38 Egypt was glad at their going:  
for dread of Israel had fallen upon them.  
39 He spread out a cloud for a covering:  
and fire to lighten the night.  
40 The people asked and he brought them quails:  
and satisfied them with the bread from heaven.  
41 He opened a rock so that the waters gushed:  
and ran in the parched land like a river.  
42 For he had remembered his holy word:  
that he gave to Abraham his servant.  
43 So he led out his people with rejoicing:  
his chosen ones with shouts of joy;  
44 He gave them the land of the nations:  
and they took possession of the fruit  
for which other peoples had toiled,  
45 So that they might keep his statutes:  
and faithfully obey his laws. O praise the Lord.

### ***Philippians 1***

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you maybe pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defence of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

### **Matthew 20:1-16**

Jesus said to his disciples: "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 marketplace; 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."



## Reflection on a page by *The Reverend Angela Peverell*

The parable of the vineyard owner and the vineyard labourers is yet another call to action for Jesus' followers. Jesus is teaching us about God's grace, and the generosity with which God extends grace and forgiveness, whether or not we "deserve" to be treated with such abundant grace and generosity, and what this means for how we are called to live as followers of Jesus.

Jesus had just had that infamous encounter with the "rich young man" in Chapter 19; the rich young man who on hearing that following Jesus means much more than being good and adhering to the commandments, that following Jesus demands uncompromising commitment and the willingness to sacrifice everything worldly.

The disciples had done exactly that, and it would appear without measuring the cost of discipleship, but then Peter asks Jesus a question that indicates he and the other disciples might expect that they deserve a reward for their sacrifice, maybe even an extra special reward, and he says: *"Look, [Jesus] we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"*

Do we hear an attitude of entitlement? Is Peter demanding favourable treatment for himself and the disciples for their sacrifice as committed followers of Jesus?

The parable of the "prodigal" son also comes to mind. Like the "good brother" who does all the right things that will secure his inheritance and his father's favour, Peter's question implies an expectation or entitlement to preferential treatment for being "good".

Jesus tells Peter and the other disciples that their efforts will be rewarded but he is warning them from assuming any entitlement to special favour, because in God's economy *"many who are first will be last, and the last will be first"*.

Jesus explains what he means by the reversal of the order of first and last through this parable.

Of course certain of the labourers in the vineyard would have put in a massive effort, getting to work early, working long and hard to receive their payment in recognition of their endurance and persistence, some working all day, some working part of the day. And of course, they are entitled to their payments or rewards for their efforts. But there are also those who, on the vineyard owner's invitation, came later and only put in a small amount of time at work in the vineyard. They too deserve their payment.

When the vineyard owner pays the labourers who were there for less than an hour the same rate as those who were there all day, the labourers who had been there all day thought him unfair. But Jesus is teaching us that the kingdom of heaven is not about fairness. In fact, if we all got what we "deserve", there would be very few of us in the kingdom, on earth or in heaven...

God's unconditional love and grace does not discriminate. God's grace does not measure our worthiness and forgives us no matter what, time and time again, just because God loves us so much! It doesn't matter if we come early and do all the right things or if we come late, just in time. God's fairness is fairness for everyone, not fairness as we humans understand it, in terms of the just reward for our efforts.

Whilst this is a parable about God's generous grace for ALL followers of Jesus. It is also a model for how we can be living examples of what it means for the first to be last and the last to be first, sharing generously, forgiving and loving, and being gracious in all circumstances with all people.

## **Readings for next week – The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Exodus 17: 1-7**

**Psalms 78.1-4, 11-16**

**Philippians 2**

**Matthew 21: 23-32**



### **Prayers for use during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Ever present God,  
be with us in our isolation,  
be close to us in our distancing,  
be healing in our sickness,  
be joy in our sadness,  
be light in our darkness,  
be wisdom in our confusion,  
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,  
that when the doors reopen  
we may with the zeal of Pentecost  
inhabit our communities  
and speak of your goodness  
to an emerging world.  
For Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy  
in this time of uncertainty and  
distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and  
fearful,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us  
from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

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