

PARISH NEWSLETTER

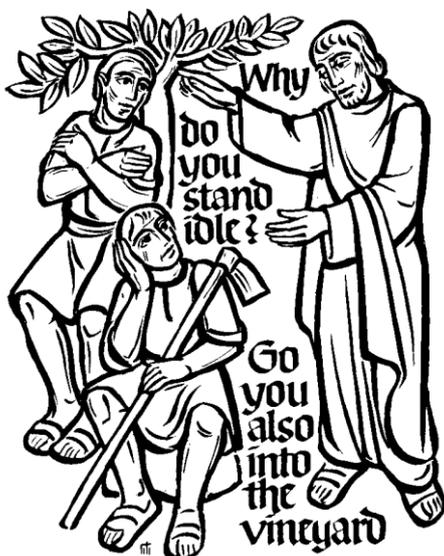
St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

Welcome to the Newsletter for our group of parishes during the period when, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some of our churches remain closed. The Sunday Eucharist is now able to be celebrated with a congregation at St Arvans, although – **please note - for the time being, because of limited space, attendance has to be by prior booking only**

You are now asked to wear face masks in church unless you have a medical reason for not doing so.

Please help to keep us informed of anyone who is in need or is isolated over the next weeks and months, and anyone in need of our prayer and support
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20th September 2020
**The Fifteenth Sunday
after Trinity (A)**



The 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**

A reading from the book of Jonah

When God saw what the people of Nineveh 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?' [3. 10 - 4. 11]

*Reader / This is the Word of the Lord
Response / Thanks be to God*

Psalm 145 1 - 8

**R/ The Lord is near to those
who call upon him**

I will exalt you, O God my King,
and bless your name for ever and ever.
Every day will I bless you and praise your
name for ever and ever.

**R/ The Lord is near to those
who call upon him**

Great is the Lord and greatly to be
praised; there is no end to his greatness.
One generation shall praise your works to
another and shall declare your power.

**R/ The Lord is near to those
who call upon him**

I will ponder the glorious splendour of your
majesty and all your marvellous works.
They shall speak of the might of your
wondrous acts, and I will tell of your
greatness.

**R/ The Lord is near to those
who call upon him**

They shall publish the remembrance
of your great goodness; they shall sing of
your righteous deeds. The Lord is
gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

**R/ The Lord is near to those
who call upon him**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians [1; 21-30]

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.

Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord
Response / Thanks be to God

Alleluia, alleluia!
 Open our heart, O Lord
 to accept the words of your Son
Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Hear the Holy Gospel according to
St Matthew **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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 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."

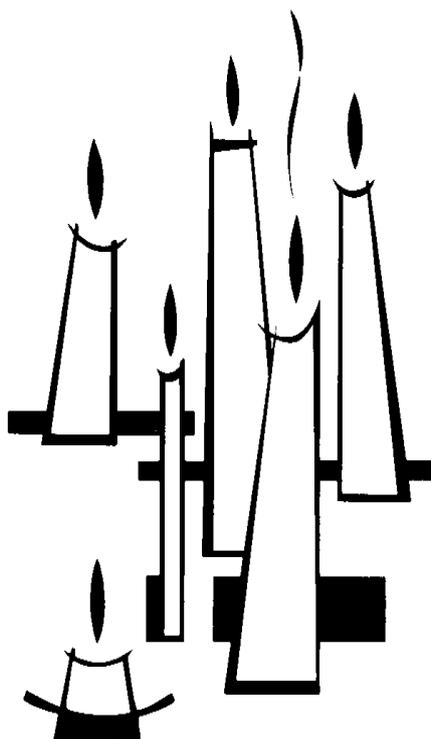
[St Matthew 20.1–16]

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

Thought for the Week

"The great problem of our time is not to formulate clear answers to neat theoretical questions but to tackle the self-destructive alienation of man in a society dedicated in theory to human values and in practice to the pursuit of power for its own sake"

Thomas Merton



For Your Prayers

That we may show the Lord's mercy and forgiveness in the way we live and in the way we treat others.. For our planet, that its resources may not be plundered but shared in a just and respectful way.

That our spiritual communions will give us the grace to serve Christ more fully.

Those throughout the world suffering from the Coronavirus Doctors, nurses and all medical staff, all carers, medical scientists and researchers.

All who are isolated and alone, those anxious for their health and well being and those of their loved ones.

For those in government throughout the world, that they may make informed, wise and compassionate decisions for the good of all

For the Church:

For the bishops of the Church: John, Archbishop of Wales; Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Jonathan, Bishop of Ebbsfleet; Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & for all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles.

All bishops, priests and deacons and all baptised Christians

For the reunion of all Christians: for Pope Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions

For the Sick & those in need:

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Patricia Hamilton; Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Amanda Morgan; Naomi; Kim; Elisabeth; Helen Herbert; Cliff Edwards; Dave

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Art Eggert; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time.

A Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

(The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament)

This Week

In today's Gospel we hear the parable about the landlord who represents God's way of caring for us. Though workers go out into his vineyard at various times of the day, he pays them all the same. When they grumble, he simply explains that he desires to be generous. How this can change our view of God and our own sense of justice?

Monday is the Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle. Friday is the feast day of Saint Cadoc.

In St Luke's Gospel this week, Jesus shares his wisdom with the crowds he addresses. We must share the light that has been entrusted to us, not hide it. The tables will be turned on those who try to greedily hold on to what they have. When people report that Jesus' family is looking for him, he uses the occasion to highlight the nature of our relationship with him: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it." When Jesus sends the Twelve to heal and to proclaim the Kingdom he tells them to serve, trusting in God: "Take nothing for the journey." Herod hears about the new prophet and wonders who it is - he has already beheaded John the Baptist. When Jesus tells his disciples that he will be handed over to others, they can't possibly understand until another day. They were afraid to ask Jesus about this.

Next Sunday we hear Paul exhorting the Philippians, "Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus," offering us a powerful image of Jesus' humble, selfless service. In St Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells a story about two sons, one who agrees to work in the vineyard but doesn't; the other who tells his father he will not work but then quietly goes to work. It is a story that challenges the chief priests and elders of the people, "Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you."



A Meditation for Trinity 15

+ The novelist Graham Greene wrote in Brighton Rock: "You can't conceive, nor can I, the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God,"

Very often the ways of God are mysterious and unfathomable. In the face of what appears to be meaningless tragedy, of inexplicable and disturbing events of all kinds, I suppose we could say that we take refuge in words like this which both express our inability to understand how such things could happen, whilst holding on to our belief that ultimately God presides over a universe where all things will somehow work for good.

We struggle throughout our lives - and I don't think it gets easier - with balancing those two seemingly contradictory ideas, because we feel that things should be just, fair and capable of a straightforward and satisfactory explanation. Some might say that this in-built feeling is itself an indication of the existence of God, who has made us in his own image.

Yet - we are still forced back to that cliché: God's ways are not our ways - and not as a cop-out or an evasion, to hide our lack of understanding, but as a simple statement of truth: clichés most often are. There is no sense of economy or human appropriateness or proportion in God's mercy. Christ tells us that it isn't enough to forgive seven times. Instead it must be

seventy-seven times, or seventy times seven, it doesn't really matter how we translate that so long as we are given a sense of the vast gulf between what we think is possible and what God actually does.

We have heard all these parables over these weeks of summer and early autumn: the kingdom of heaven is where our sins, and the alienation which is part and parcel of our fallen human nature, are forgiven without limit or restriction - here we are given a glimpse - a blinding flash of light - of the reality of Greene's phrase: "the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God."

So, this morning we are brought up short by the strange parable of the workers in the vineyard.

This, too, Our Lord says to us, is what God is like. And, again, our first reaction is one of incredulity - what on earth can he mean by this? It's a story which offends our own limited restricted view of fairness and one which, if I might say so, brings out the spiritual trade unionist in all of us! Now we don't need to say that when Jesus makes use of parables in this way, he is always doing so in a non-literal way. Ultimately, it goes without saying, God isn't the owner of a vineyard, and he can't be said to need help and co-operation in anything.

And whatever we receive from him is by way of being a radically free gift - our expectations or ideas of what might be owed to us, whatever they might be, haven't the slightest relevance here. In relation to God what "rights" can we be said to have? Having said that, before we lapse into a kind of reactionary pessimism, the message that comes over from St Matthew's account of the parable is quite reassuring. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, isn't a capricious ruler of the universe, handing out rewards or punishments according to the whim of the moment. There is no question in the story we've just heard of the owner of the vineyard somehow measuring what anyone deserves. The question of payment or rewards handed out to those who work in his vineyard is simply a question of how generous he is. It's nothing to do with labour relations or the principles of fairness we apply to our dealings with one another. It's about the nature of God, and the unlimited nature of divine love and mercy.

The Gospels are full of these stories of God's generosity: the loaves and fishes feeding thousands of people, the wine provided at the marriage at Cana, the indication that forgiveness should be almost without limit and so on. And the greatest of all is the mystery of the cross - the mystery which stands at the very heart of the nature of God - Christ's giving of his life for us in order to penetrate the deepest anguish and hurt of humanity's alienation from God and to redeem us and bring us home.

So we are being reminded here in this parable, which seems at first to be about our daily work, that our faith - our salvation itself - stands or falls by the unlimited generosity, mercy and love of the Father, and it is not for us to try to place any limits of our own upon his generosity. For whereas human gifts are often things we come to expect - sometimes justifiably - as a right, the Father's divine gift in giving us his Son is greater than anything we could expect or imagine. The shock or the scandal of the Incarnation and its fulfilment upon the hill of Calvary is something we should never forget, and the gift we are given as a result is something we should never take for granted.

So, despite the fact that we might be tempted on a surface reading or a superficial hearing of Our Lord's parable of the labourers in the vineyard to sympathise with the complaints from those who, from dawn, worked in the day's heat and who were shocked to find that the workers who started at 5 o'clock received the exact same pay, we should suspend our judgement.

This isn't about a fair day's pay for a fair day's work or anything like that. The Christian faith and Christian moral theology has a lot to say about the necessity for fairness and justice in our dealings with one another, things which our society should listen to a great deal more than it is at the moment, but that's not what is being spoken of here.

Today's Gospel parable isn't about justice at all but about salvation and the outpouring of God's love. All who are faithfully part of Christ, all who work in the Lord's vineyard, will receive "the usual daily pay" - that is, eternal life, life in all its fullness. With God there are no half measures, there is no such thing as a half-share or a quarter-share in salvation. And,

most importantly, salvation isn't ours because we expect it, or because we deserve it or think we deserve it, but simply because we are loved by God. Yes, even you and me - we only stand to benefit from the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God," +

