

Worship at Home – Sunday 20th September 2020

Provided by Revd Cecil White

Call to worship:

The peace of the Lord Jesus is with us all.

Let us pray:

Eternal God, we gather in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We praise you for all that you are and for all you have done for the human family through him. We ask that, as we deign to approach your holy throne, we may have the faith to offer worship through the merits of Christ alone.

Forgive us our wrongdoing; the sins that beset us; the things we have left undone. Grant us your pardon, your peace, and, above all your love, so that our hearts may overflow with thankfulness.

Receive our worship and may we unite with the whole family of your church on this day: the day of Christ's resurrection!

Amen.

A hymn of the Ascension by Charles Wesley

1 Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia!

to his throne beyond the skies. Alleluia!

Christ, the Lamb for sinners given, Alleluia!

enters now the highest heaven. Alleluia!

2 There for him high triumph waits; Alleluia!

lift your heads, eternal gates. Alleluia!

He has conquered death and sin; Alleluia!

take the King of glory in. Alleluia!

3 Highest heaven its Lord receives; Alleluia!

yet he loves the earth he leaves. Alleluia!

Though returning to his throne, Alleluia!

still he calls us all his own. Alleluia!

4 Still for us he intercedes; Alleluia!

his atoning death he pleads, Alleluia!

near himself prepares our place, Alleluia!

he the first fruits of our race. Alleluia!

5 There we shall with you remain, Alleluia!

partners of your endless reign, Alleluia!

see you with unclouded view, Alleluia!

find our heaven of heavens in you. Alleluia!

P.T.O.

Please read from your own Bible St Matthew 20:1-16 - The Labourers in the Vineyard

Sermon

Matthew's gospel has accompanied us since Advent last year. His 'good news' seems to stress the importance given to the poor and marginalised and how their new status in the Kingdom emanates from a God of grace.

In this passage we see how Christ presents a different order that disarms the customary pecking order of rank and privilege. Labourers hired early in the day receive the same reward for their labours as those who are hired later in the day, and so Christ's words at the end of the passage emphasise how those who are late may be first, and they who have been hanging around longest may be last: 'But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first'. (verse 30)

Christ teaches that the undeserving can receive a share of God's grace too! So, Divine grace does not rest on an outmoded human merit system of first and last. It is what it is: God's unmerited favour, free to all.

The unfairness in the reading is very much how life may be perceived today. There are haves and have nots. But if we detach ourselves from that earthly understanding for just a moment, and revisit the heavenly values of the Kingdom, we see that what the earth may see as unfair is not the case in God's new order. This is the new value system that requires our attention, belief and practice.

Prayers:

Using the silence and taking our time, we hold before God those who are on the margins of life: the homeless poor and those who can see no cure for their ills either physical or emotional.... We hold before God, our town or village, our neighbourhood, and our street ... we pray for those who live closest to us (next door). Using the silence and taking our time, we hold before God our family and friends ... Ask God to help them stay safe.

Now, as our Saviour taught us, we pray: *Our Father, who art in heaven....*

Praise God from whom all blessing flow,

Praise Him all creatures here below,

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts,

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Ending: Go in peace and may the peace of God go with us. Amen.