



Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
† Sunday 24th September 2017

In England and Wales Cycle of Prayer: In Thanksgiving for the Harvest, the fruits of human work, and for reverent use of creation
Keynote: We give thanks to our God who is generous and forgiving

Prophet Isaiah 55:6-9

The phrase ‘*Seek the Lord*’ was a ritual call to the People of God to assemble at the Temple for prayer. God can be everywhere, in the Temple or without. ‘*Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. Let the wicked (man) abandon his way, the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him,*’ says Isaiah, ‘*for our God is rich in forgiving.*’ The prophet reminds his listeners, that while God may be forgiving and near at hand, God’s ways are not ours. ‘*My ways are not your ways,*’ speaks the Lord, ‘*The heavens are as high above the earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.*’

Responsorial Psalm 144 [145] – A psalm in praise of God’s fidelity

Letter of Paul to the Philippians 1:20-24, 27

Paul writes from prison in Rome about his personal situation and reflects on what lies ahead, ‘*Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or by my death... I am caught by this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake.*’ Paul understands what life means: ‘*Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more.*’ The apostle urges the Church to, ‘*Avoid anything in your everyday lives, that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ.*’

Gospel according to Matthew 20:1-16

‘*Jesus said to his disciples: “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard.”*’ Many interpretations might be made about the meaning of this parable. The importance of work and the dignity labour for those who earn their bread to keep themselves and their families; the generosity of the landowner, who seems to represent God. It is almost ‘pick-your-own’ time! But the parable follows immediately upon a discussion among the disciples about who is to be the first among them. Jesus has just told them ‘*the last shall be first.*’ So this parable may be an important commentary about what it means to be favoured – to experience generosity and justice at the hands of another. There are no worker’s rights in this, only justice, and as it turns out in the parable, the last shall be first and the first last. “*My friend,*” the landowner says, “*I am not being unjust to you... take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last-comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?*” So Jesus makes the point of the parable for us, ‘*Thus the last will be first, and the first last.*’

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