Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity
Prayers, Readings, Reflection and Song.

“Welcome to another short act of worship for the Parish Church of St Martin. For those who are able to follow it as written, I hope it offers some comfort, encouragement and a sense of being together despite the distance between us.”
Rev Jonny
Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you, before you and within you.

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

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you

Every week, as we worship together, we have the opportunity to admit to ourselves, to each other, and to God that we do not always live as we are called. In this time of confession, this time of opening our hearts, let us remember that God is merciful and just, eager to offer grace and love. Let us pray, first in silence.

May your loving mercy come to me, O Lord, and your salvation according to your word: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light to my path: Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

O let your mercy come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.
The Collect for the day

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.

All Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading, Philippians 1: 21-end

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.

This is the word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God
Gospel Reading, from Matthew 20: 1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers 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 laborers 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.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ

Reflection

When I was 5 years old a letter came for me in the post. 5 year olds don’t get many letters, and this one looked important, so you can imagine how excited I was. Inside was an invitation from the local branch of the Farmer’s Union asking me to judge an upcoming Sheep Dog Trials.

Now I was young, but I had watched One Man and His Dog on TV and I knew what a Sheep Dog Trial was and I was beside myself with happiness.
It didn’t take long for my parents to realise that the letter had been wrongly delivered to our address and was in fact intended for the acclaimed sheep farmer (also called Jonathan Scott) who lived at the end of the valley. I don’t think they let me down very gently because I remember being absolutely crushed. This was my moment – my chance to shine – and it had been taken away from me. I felt I was owed my Sheep Dog Trials.

30 years later I’ve just about gotten over it, but the fact I still remember this story, means it’s probably eating away at my subconscious on some level.

It raises the question though – what do we think we are owed? What do we hope to gain in life – and more importantly what do we hope to gain from our faith?

The message of Jesus is clear – those who hope to gain their life will lose it; do not look for riches in this life; the first will be last and the last will be first.

As we see in this parable – the wages for labour are not distributed according to the laws of commerce, but according to the abundance of Grace. ‘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?’

Such a message can jar with our sense of justice and fair-play. Surely, we think, this can’t be right. Fair pay for fair work is the way things should be – you could never run a business or a society in this way, there would be open revolt.

But the Kingdom of God is not a business. The Kingdom of God is not a society. The Kingdom of Heaven is a relationship with God which operate by laws that we cannot conceive of in this world – try as we might, we just haven’t mastered the laws of love and grace.

Because to fully appreciate the power of God’s love and God’s grace, we require a different mindset – we have to be prepared to turn our expectations upside down.

At the heart of this parable, at the heart of all the teachings of Jesus, indeed at the heart of Jesus’ death and resurrection, is the insistence that it is in letting go that we receive – it is in emptying that we are filled, it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Where we tend to think of freedom as coming only when we have enough, freedom comes when we let go of that worldview. When we let go of the idea that we deserve things, or that we can be in control of life, or that we should always be healthy, or that our relationships should always go well without a hiccup. If we get to the place when we can let those things go there is a kind of freedom there. This doesn’t excuse us from responsibility, and it doesn’t mean that we don’t still have those things going on in our lives, but we hold them in a different way – we hold them lightly.

“The word “human” comes from the Latin humus, which means earth. Being human means acknowledging that we’re made from the earth and will return to the earth. For a few years we dance around on the stage of life and have the chance to reflect a little bit of God’s glory. We are earth that has come to consciousness. If we discover this power in ourselves and know that we are God’s creatures, that we come from God and return to God, that’s enough.

As a human, I’m just a tiny moment of consciousness, a small part of creation, a particle that reflects only a fragment of God’s glory. And yet that’s enough...It’s really that simple.

If we have not experienced that connection, knowing that we are indeed a fragment of the Great Flame, we will most certainly need to accumulate more and more outer things as substitutes for self-worth. This, of course, is the great spiritual illusion. We needn’t acquire what we already have. Our value comes from our inherent participation in God.

Our participation in God. Our relationship with God. As I said, this is where the Kingdom of Heaven is to be found – in holding lightly to the things of this world, and in abiding in relationship with God.

As a 5 year old, I hadn’t quite got that message. The Sheep Dog Trials were, I thought, meant for me – how could anyone take them away. Perhaps, in the 30 years since, I have begun to realise just how blessed my life already is – not because of what I have, or what I’m owed – but because I abide in the love of God, and his grace is all that I need.

Amen.
**Prayers of Intercession**

*Pray for one another – those in our church community*

*Pray for the Parish, the Island and the World*

*Pray for the sick, the isolated, the anxious and depressed*

*Pray for the dying, and those who mourn*

*Pray for yourselves, and for your own needs*

   **Lord in your mercy**

   **All**  **Hear our prayer**

**The Intercessions may end as follows**

   **Merciful Father**

   **All**  **Accept these prayers**

   **for the sake of your son,**

   **our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Peace**

   Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,

   since as members of one body you are called to peace.

   **The peace of the Lord be always with you.**

   **All**  **and also with you.**

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us

   **All**  **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 trespasses**

   **as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

   **And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

   **For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory**

   **For ever and ever. Amen.**
The Blessing.

The God of all grace,
who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,
establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and
the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always.
All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
All In the name of Christ. Amen.