

SERVICE SHEET
20th September - Trinity 15

Canticle - Jubilate - a Song of Joy

**O be joyful in the Lord,
all the earth;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.**

**Know that the Lord is God;
it is he that has made us
and we are his;
we are his people
and the sheep of his pasture.**

**Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise
give thanks to him
and bless his name.**

**For the Lord is gracious;
his steadfast love is everlasting,
and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.**
Psalm 100

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

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

New Testament

Philippians 1.21-end

²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

²⁷ 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, ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— ³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Psalm 105.37-end

³⁷ Then he brought Israel out with silver and gold,
and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.

³⁸ **Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.**

³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.

⁴⁰ **They asked, and he brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.**

⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.

⁴² **For he remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, his servant.**

⁴³ So he brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with singing.

⁴⁴ **He gave them the lands of the nations,
and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,**

⁴⁵ that they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws.

Praise the LORD!

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Gospel Reading

Matthew 20.1-16

¹For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; ⁴and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶And 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?" ⁷They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." ⁸When 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." ⁹When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they

grumbled against the landowner, ¹² 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." ¹³ 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? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

ST JOHN

Those who are ill and their carers:

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Chris Dickerson, Elizabeth Chapman, Claire Kendrick, Nick Rutter, John and Sonia Doidge

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Anthony Staples aged 6, Audrey Egleston, Colin Eastwood, Yvonne Harper, Ian and Judith Watson, Alison Cox-Toplis, Julian & Wendy, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Robert Harris, Bill Hill, James Knight, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Renee Wellings, Felicity Woodfield

Those who have died

Richard Keay

Post Communion Prayer

Keep, O Lord, your Church,
with your perpetual mercy;
and, because without you our human frailty cannot but fall,
keep us ever by your help
from all things hurtful,
and lead us to all things
profitable to our salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

CHURCH NOTICES

20th September 2020

A VERY WARM WELCOME BACK to everyone here today.

AIDS TO WORSHIP

~Large print orders of service & hymn books

~Hearing Loops at St Michael - Please set your hearing aid to 'T' to listen.

~Gluten-free wafers are available.

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH ROOF APPEAL.

We urgently need money to repair the roof on the southside of the church. If you can donate please use the blue envelopes, fill in the front if you can gift aid and make all cheques payable to the 'PCC of St Michael and St Mary, Lichfield'. Please mark the envelope 'Church Roof'. This will really help the count team

Many thanks

Brenda Liptrot

ATTENDING CHURCH

PLEASE REMEMBER TO...

- *Wear a mask over your nose and mouth before you enter church*
- Sanitise your hands on the way in – sanitisers are available
- Keep a proper distance at all times
- Sit only in seats as indicated
- Children are welcome but there will be no toys or activities provided
- Leave the church as instructed by the clergy and do not stay in church for conversation
- Take with you the Sunday service sheet when you go
- Conversation may continue in the open space of the churchyard
- Outside church please keep in a group of no more than six people. Do not move from group to group.
- Be aware of others at all times

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 20th September

8:00am Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am Holy Communion	St John
11:30am Private Prayer	St John
6.00pm Zoom service	

Monday 21st September

8:15am Morning Prayer	Zoom
7:00pm Deanery Synod	Zoom

Tuesday 22nd September

8:15am Morning Prayer	Zoom
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Wednesday 23rd September

All day	Private Prayer	St John
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
10.30am	Bible Study	Zoom

Thursday 24th September

OFFICE CLOSED

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Friday 25th September

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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Saturday 26th September

Sunday 27th September

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St John
11:30am	Private Prayer	St John

WORSHIP MATTERS

WORSHIP BY ZOOM will be on the first and third Sundays of each month. The next services are on. **Sunday 20th September 6.00pm and Sunday 4th October 6.00pm**

You can join the service from 5.45pm. The service will last about 40mins.

If you have not had a link by Friday at 11am please contact the office office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk

FLOWERS AT ST MICHAEL'S Now that we're back in church, if you would like to do the flowers, please sign the rota at the back of church. Flowers will be provided. *Diana*

OTHER NOTICES

CAKE SALE in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support: Sunday 27th September at 11am outside St Michael's Church. In place of our usual Coffee Morning, we will, this year, be holding a cake sale to raise funds for this worthwhile cause. Please come along and buy a cake (or several!) and tell your friends about this too.

If you cannot join us on 27th you can still donate by using this link: <https://thyg.uk/BUU004057892> Any donation will then be added to our total.

To keep within the current regulations, all those who wish to buy from the stall must follow the indicated route and wear a mask at all times. Please bring cash with you for payment.

JAM JARS. Thanks to all for the wonderful response. I have enough for now and still plenty for Crab Apple Jelly if the harvest is fruitful. I've made several jars of chutney, put away to mature so in 3 months I'll bring some to church – in plenty of time for Christmas! *Maggie*

LICHFIELD FOOD BANK. Thank you for your continuing support for Lichfield Foodbank. The latest needs are

- Tinned tuna
- Tinned vegetables
- Biscuits

- Tinned fruit

We will be having a tinned food collection at our forthcoming harvest service. Full details later.

BIBLE STUDY

The Book of Acts

On **Wednesday 23rd September** we begin a new series of Bible Studies. Between now and the beginning of Advent we will be looking at the Book of Acts. The book tells the story of the early church and spread of the gospel. It raises all kinds of themes worth thinking about and discussing. If you would like to join in our Bible Study please contact Angie in the office for the zoom link. Anyone is welcome and we already have a variety of people who attend, including those who simply enjoy listening to what is going on!

WARNING

If you receive an email from: **Revd Preb Simon Baker** and the email address is:
churchvicar8@gmail.com

Please do not reply or open any attachments.

I never use that title in any emails I send and this is not my email address. Please block the email address and everything sent from it to you should go into spam.

If you receive any email that asks you to spend any personal money on my behalf please delete it at once. *Simon*

SERMON

Trinity 15: 20th September 2020

The parable of "The Labourers in the Vineyard."

The stories that Jesus tells, the parables, are intended to get us to think and think hard - about the ways of the world that we have created around us - and the way that the world could be - the Kingdom of God. Parables are often drawn from ordinary life and they challenge us to look carefully at our assumptions, our prejudices and our all too easy acceptance of how things are.

Because parables are open and challenging it is dangerous when we come across one that is well known and to which we think we have a ready answer. It's dangerous because the pat answer stops us reflecting further - it might even cause us to think - yes we know what this is about - let's move on.

Such a parable is the one that we have just heard - its usually given the title of the Labourers in the Vineyard - though sometimes the Generous Landowner.

This story is often interpreted as an allegory - that is a story where each of the characters stands for someone or something. So, in this case the wealthy and powerful land owner, who rewards all the workers equally, stands for God - God bringing gracious salvation to all. The workers are those who hear God's call to come and serve him - and the latecomers are rewarded as much as those who have laboured long. Sometimes regrettably that is interpreted further as Christians or Gentiles receiving the same reward as God's ancient people - the Jews. We should always be suspicious of any interpretation that favours Christians at the expense of the Jews - after all it is something that St Paul himself warns us not to do.

The parable does begin with the phrase the Kingdom of Heaven is like ... but that does not necessarily mean that what we are about to read is a straight description of how things are in the Kingdom. It equally challenges us to think about what the Kingdom is like and how the parable reveals it. What is more in the preceding portion of Matthew's gospel Jesus says how hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom and gives an assurance to the disciples that the first shall be last and the last first. So maybe this parable should be thought about in that context – the context of things turned upside down and reversed – the Kingdom not about the rich who run the kingdoms of the world but the poor and the last who will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, let's see if we can look at the parable differently and think more widely. Perhaps we can begin to see how unsatisfactory the common interpretation of it is and how it stops us from thinking critically about ourselves and the world around us. Maybe we ought to read the parable in its own terms, as an account of the interaction between a land owner and those who work for him. I admit that the interpretation we are about to embark upon is not the usual one and maybe is not at all what Jesus intended. But it is very hard sometimes to know exactly what was intended when the story was first told.

We are tempted to see the landowner as standing for God because he is a powerful figure – he hires workers all day long – and in the end declares his own generosity and justice as he pays them all the same.

But just look at the context. Here are labourers who need to be hired each day. A ready supply of workers – but only if someone wants them. Each day they do not know if they will make enough for themselves and their families. And even if they have work today, they will back in the market-place tomorrow. It is a precarious and knife edge existence. It works well for the landowner and others who hire them – but it does not work for the labourer. The story reflects labour conditions in the time of Jesus – free workers who are not much better than slaves. It also reflects our own time too – many work on zero hours contracts – many of the newly unemployed will rely upon casual work that cannot be guaranteed.

That's true in our own country – but it is also true in the places across where they produce and manufacture the things we happily consume – our clothing, our electronic goods, the food we eat. The parable thought about differently immediately reveals something about our own world and asks us – is this right – is this just? Is this the way of the Kingdom?

When we turn to the landowner, we usually see him as someone who intervenes justly and well in this unjust world. He goes looking for workers throughout the day and in the end, he does pay them all the same. But let's not forget that the market is rigged in his favour – he owes these workers nothing except what they agree to be paid. And when they are dismissed at the end of the day – what does he care? He does not do anything to change the system.

Even the apparent justice and good that the landowner seems to bring about is called into question by the way in which it is done. He calls out those who arrived last to be paid first. Why? He could have been discrete about the fact that he was going to pay them a day's wage. But no, he pays them in full view of the others. It is as if he wants the other workers and the late arrivals to be in no doubt about his power and where his

decision to be generous comes from. He makes a very visible and public point – I do this because I can.

And what is the result? There is argument and division among the labourers. They all share the same poor conditions and uncertain existence – they should be united – and now they are divided and set against each other by the actions of a rich and powerful man. Surely this dissention and division cannot be a sign of the Kingdom of God?

You may not agree with this way of reading the parable. But at least the parable is doing its work and making us think. What would a more just world be like – what would it mean to take care of the most vulnerable – how can we treat those who prop up our economy from beneath with dignity and justice – how can our consumer choices make a difference? Why do we always identify our ideas God with figures of power and influence – even when they tell us blatant untruths and lies about the way the world is? How will those we all too complacently recognise as the first among us become last and those who are ignored as the last and least become first?

It is easy to rest in the familiarity of scripture and miss the radical challenge and call to a new insight. And if it makes us feel uncomfortable – whoever said that bringing in the Kingdom would be comfortable or easy. Jesus' whole ministry is made of interactions with others and stories told to disciples and crowds which leave questions hanging – what are you going to do now – how are you going to respond? The same questions are before us now.