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Service for the 15th Sunday after Trinity, 20th September 2020

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

We come to worship.

The Lord our God is great and to be highly praised.

The Lord our God is great beyond our understanding.

The Lord our God is loving and full of mercy.

We come to worship.

Amen.

HYMN: Be Thou my vision

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art—
thou my best thought in the day and the night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord;
thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

3 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always:
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

4 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Ancient Irish, tr Mary Byrne & Eleanor Hull

FAMILY TALK: **Obstacles**

I am sure that many of us have goals that we are working towards at the moment.

The Smiley Face is your goal, whatever it is. But to get the goal, you have to walk along a certain path. I will show you. I am going to walk my path keeping one foot on the wool.

That was easy! But it's not always as easy as that. If I put a chair across the middle – or it could have been people – the walk has become much more difficult with obstacles. In life, when we want to reach a certain goal, we have to be more determined to get to the end of the path.

In J K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Dumbledore says to Harry "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities".

In the Harry Potter stories there is a 'Sorting Hat'. The Hat recognises an individual's qualities and allocates the young person to an appropriate 'house' in the school. In a similar

way, we imagine God recognising different qualities in us and calling us to a vocation that uses our gifts. We hope that we use our gifts to the best of our abilities to reach our goals. The following reading is taken from one of St Paul's letters to the Philippians. He realises that it is a struggle to know and choose your path, and stick to it when it is difficult. Paul wants to encourage people and to praise them for the path they want to take.

SCRIPTURE READING

Philippians 1: 27-30

²⁷ Now, the important thing is that your way of life should be as the gospel of Christ requires, so that, whether or not I am able to go and see you, I will hear that you are standing firm with one common purpose and that with only one desire you are fighting together for the faith of the gospel. ²⁸ Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will prove to them that they will lose and that you will win, because it is God who gives you the victory. ²⁹ For you have been given the privilege of serving Christ, not only by believing in him, but also by suffering for him. ³⁰ Now you can take part with me in the battle. It is the same battle you saw me fighting in the past, and as you hear, the one I am fighting still.

PRAYERS

Let us pray.

Lord God, we all belong to your kingdom and we bring our different lives and experiences to worship you today, the true and living God.

Today is a day when all of us are here, here to worship and praise you. Accept, O God, all that we bring and all that we offer, in the name of Christ.

Lord, we don't always know how we got to where we are – and we certainly don't always know where we are going. We don't always choose the right path and we certainly don't always follow it. We don't always deal well with the struggles of life and we don't always give thanks for the joys of life. We don't always think of the effects our choices cause to others, near and far. We know we can be selfish, wanting what we want no matter what the cost to others. Almighty God, forgive us, reassure us and cradle us within your forgiveness.

Lord, we praise you for all that you are, for the creation that is yours, for its beauty and wonder, its diversity and richness. We praise you for your presence and comfort. We praise you that, day by day, you amaze and enrich us and reveal yourself in new and unexpected ways. We praise you that you are the same yesterday, today and for ever – and yet forever new.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

HYMN: Father, hear the prayer

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Father, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.

2 Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.

3 Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

Love Maria Willis

St Matthew 20: 1-16 *The workers in the vineyard*

20 “The Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a man who went out early in the morning to hire some men to work in his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them the regular wage, a silver coin a day, and sent them to work in his vineyard. ³ He went out again to the marketplace at nine o'clock and saw some men standing there doing nothing, ⁴ so he told them, ‘You also go and work in the vineyard, and I will pay you a fair wage.’ ⁵ So they went. Then at twelve o'clock and again at three o'clock he did the same thing. ⁶ It was nearly five o'clock when he went to the marketplace and saw some other men still standing there. ‘Why are you wasting the whole day here doing nothing?’ he asked them. ⁷ ‘No one hired us,’ they answered. ‘Well, then, you go and work in the vineyard,’ he told them.

⁸ “When evening came, the owner told his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with those who were hired last and ending with those who were hired first.’ ⁹ The men who had begun to work at five o'clock were paid a silver coin each. ¹⁰ So when the men who were the first to be hired came to be paid, they thought they would get more; but they too were given a silver coin each. ¹¹ They took their money and started grumbling against the employer. ¹² ‘These men who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘while we put up with a whole day's work in the hot sun—yet you paid them the same as you paid us!’ ¹³ ‘Listen, friend,’ the owner answered one of them, ‘I have not cheated you. After all, you agreed to do a day's work for one silver coin. ¹⁴ Now take your pay and go home. I want to give this man who was hired last as much as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do as I wish with my own money? Or are you jealous because I am generous?’”

¹⁶ And Jesus concluded, “So those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last.”

Thanks be to God.

COMMENT: *Mrs Pat Lomax*

I want to thank you for being with us today and to show my appreciation I am going to give each of the men here two gold stars to show you how thankful I am.

However, it has to be in a virtual way, because I cannot hand them out. What do you think about that? Do you agree that it is a good thing for me to offer?

Now, I'm going to give all the ladies here four gold stars. So, do you think it's fair that the men get two stars and the ladies have four? Do their four gold stars make the men less thankful that they received only two gold stars? I imagine the men are thinking that Pat's less nice, now, than she was earlier?

But why? The nice thing that I did for the men didn't change! The problem is the men think I was being nicer to the ladies. What if I tell the ladies to give the gold stars back to me but the men get to keep their two gold stars? Would that put it right?

Matthew's is the only Gospel to include this well-known story of Jesus about social and economic issues in first-century Palestine. The vineyard is a common symbol for Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a story of a landowner that uses imagery familiar to its original audience. The landowner hires workers according to love and generosity, rather than the usual worldly or human way of treating workers at that time – or, in fact, even now. He tells them when he hires them, “I will pay you whatever is right.” Then at the end of the day, the owner does exactly what he said he'd do, he pays the workers what is right; he pays them fairly.

So, you *might* think the workers would be happy to get fairly paid for their work? But they are not happy. In fact, they are upset! The reason is because there were some other workers who started working later in the day, but they were paid the same amount as the first workers. In other words, the second set of workers received the same amount of money for doing less work: they were paid even more fairly than the first set of workers. The first set of workers thought this was unfair as they had worked all day.

To review, if the first set of workers had *only* paid attention to what they had been given, they would have been very pleased. However, they were worrying about others workers doing less work for the same money. What they missed out on was the good news that they had been treated very well and very fairly by the landowner.

This undifferentiated pay policy made some of the workers angry, and their reaction is just as understandable today. But this is not teaching about how to run a business: it is a parable to illustrate what true compassion means – that no worker's family should be deprived of their food for the day. It is a message and a challenge

as relevant to contemporary economics and 'zero hours' contracts as it was 2,000 years ago.

God loves us and treats us very well, just like the landowner treated all of the workers. Here are some words of warning to go along with today's good news. If we decide to focus on what *other* people are getting, then we will miss out on the good news that God is giving.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The response to the phrase "Ever-Living God, bless them all in this and every hour" is....
God, be with them.

Let us pray

In the struggles and joys of this day, we pray
for those who feel demoralised, weighed down, frightened or desolate,
for those in pain, facing illness,
for those who are part of this Church, who are needing your healing hands at this time,
for those troubled in mind and spirit, who find no peace or calm
for those alone and lonely, without friend or comfort,
for those who see no clear path for them or purpose in their lives
Ever-living God, bless them all in this and every hour: ***God, be with them.***

God of mercy, please bless and help the poor, hungry and homeless of the world, and all migrant and displaced peoples. We remember all nations that are fighting to curb and survive the current pandemic and all those who have lost the little that they have. We bring before you all who are fearful for their future.
Ever-living God, bless them all in this and every hour. ***God, be with them.***

Loving Father, we ask your blessing upon all who have important decisions to make this week. We pray for those who are rulers and politicians, for scientists and research workers, for judges and all who are strive to bring peace.
Ever-living God, bless them all in this and every hour. ***God, be with them.***

Loving Father, we give thanks for our homes and our loved ones. We pray for all who have influenced our lives through their example and teaching. We think especially of all young people, students returning to schools, colleges and university at this difficult time, and for their teachers and lecturers.
Ever-living God, bless them all in this and every hour. ***God, be with them***

Amen.

HYMN: Take my life

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise

2 Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,

3 Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from Thee,

4 Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will, and make it thine
shall be no longer mine;
take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love, my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will b
ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal

BLESSING

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all.

Amen.