

**Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit**

**WORSHIP AT HOME – Sunday 20 Sept**

*prepared by the Revd Tim Searle*

**Preparation**

As we prepare to worship let us keep silence for a moment as we calm our minds and focus on God's unfailing presence with us all.

**Call to Worship**

God, lover of the lost & healer of the broken, you reconcile those divided by sin and you call the outcast to be a guest at your table.

Be with us here in this place today, teaching us mercy and love.

Help us to praise, love and serve you in our worship and in our lives.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

Be thou my vision (StF 545, v 1, 2, 4 & 5)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiukM6WHQEQ>

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

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

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:  
be thou mine inheritance now and always;  
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of Heaven, thou heaven's  
bright Sun,  
O grant me its joy after victory is won;  
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever  
befall,  
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8<sup>th</sup> century

**Prayers of Approach and Confession**

Eternal God, creator of all, giver of life,  
we praise and worship you.

We thank you that you have  
always loved the world you have made;  
and that, however far we stray from you,  
your love is always there to welcome us  
home.

We do not deserve your love,  
but we dare to believe the good news of your  
mercy  
declared by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be present with us this day  
as with penitent and forgiving hearts  
we celebrate your sacrifice of love.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit,  
that our worship may truly express our love  
for you and for one another.  
Make us glad and give us joy and peace.

*Silence*

God of justice and mercy,  
we come before you  
knowing that we are all in need of  
forgiveness.

We have sinned against you  
in our speaking and in our silence;  
in our thinking and in our thoughtlessness;  
in our actions and in our inaction.

We have sinned against you,  
in not loving you with our whole heart  
and soul and strength;  
in not loving our sisters and brothers in  
Christ.

Grant us, O Lord, your forgiveness,  
restore us in the image of your Son,  
and lead us along the way to your kingdom,  
to the glory of your name.

*Silence*

Lord Jesus,  
We recognise that you have given each one of us a part to play in your body.  
We thank you that you believe in us and have a vision for your church.  
Strengthen us where we are weak,  
guard us where we are strong,  
give us humility where we are proud,  
and in your patient love  
continue to call us to serve you  
wherever and whenever needed. Amen

### **Read Psalm 105**

### **Read Matthew 20 v 1-16**

### **Reflection**

How long have you been a member of your church? Are you a newbie, or an old-hand? Think back to the days when we worshipped together in church buildings and visualise who sat where; usually the same faces in the same places! Some will have been there longer, and some not so long. Among the gathered will have been the one who has been there the longest, an aura of reverence no doubt surrounding them. And somewhere is the person who has been there for the shortest amount of time, possibly shuffling in their seat and wondering what everyone else thinks of them.

Do you think those who have been members longer should have more benefits? More access to pastoral care? More influence with the leadership? More clout when it comes to making decisions?

Of course not I hear you cry! But secretly we all know that this is precisely what does happen all too often. And secretly we may also share the indignation expressed by the longer-serving labourers in today's Gospel story who saw their treatment as a matter of unfairness.

Can we fail to feel sympathy for those who worked the longest? These hired hands laboured harder and longer and got the same pay. How can we not feel a painful sense of injustice?

Living in community, we inevitably have experiences that allow us to identify with the workers in today's gospel story. Perhaps we've had experiences of giving up our precious time and energy to support the work of the church knowing full well that there are plenty of equally able people who haven't pulled their weight, at least in our opinions. What is fair and what is not is something we begin to form an opinion of from a very young age.

But as mature Christians, one of the first things we learn from today's Gospel reading is that Jesus didn't care much about fairness or unfairness in the way we tend to think about it. Through the story in today's Gospel, Jesus turns our normal views upside down, shaking them out, so we can more clearly see the truth of God's values. He challenges our religious assumptions, affirming a radical understanding of God that upsets our conventional views of what we consider to be just and fair.

Jesus succeeds in shocking us out of our common misunderstandings of God, a misunderstanding that God's justice is just like our own - however flawed that may be.

Jesus wants us to experience this parable as a way to learn what lies beyond viewing events as simply unfair or fair and to catch a glimpse of the utter and limitless generosity of God. He wants us to understand that the worth of human beings is not measured by how much we earn or how well we perform or by any of our usual measures – status, popularity, social achievement, productivity, wealth, physical appearance.

Jesus wants us to know that our worth as human beings is absolutely affirmed by God, who guarantees our value as human beings – not because of anything we have done or can do – but because of God’s creative and life-affirming love for us all. Jesus wants us to know that in the face of our limited, worldly understanding of what is fair and what is unfair, God works with a different reality, in a different direction, and by different standards.

However we are worshipping today, however long or short we’ve been involved with the church, however significant or unimportant we may feel within this community, our Gospel reading reminds us that we are part of an equal community before God. There is no high-table at God’s table. Instead God calls us to respond positively to what he has given us. He wants us to work in his vineyard with happy hearts and willing bodies whether we started first thing, or whether we’ve come late to the party.

In telling this parable of the labourers in the vineyard, or put another way ‘the ones who worked different amounts for the same pay’, Jesus wants us to know that God would have us concentrate on our own spiritual condition, not spending time and energy considering everybody else’s, and to accept our ultimate worth and our ultimate purpose without comparing our contributions to those of others.

Today we have heard Jesus turn one of our normal, worldly views upside down. In so doing, according to our faith, he has actually turned those values right-side up. Today’s parable teaches that life is, from God’s point of view, not a matter of fairness or unfairness. It is not a matter of deserving or undeserving. What it is, is a matter of the simple yet profound privilege we have of serving together in the vineyard of God’s community ... nothing more, nothing less. Amen!

## **Prayers of Concern for the World and Each Other**

Loving God,  
in all the changes and chances of our lives,  
all the many uncertainties we face,  
we thank you that you are a God we can  
depend on,  
always good, always loving,  
always merciful and always faithful.

We thank you for the assurance  
that, whatever we may be confronted with,  
your love will go on reaching out,  
your hand go on supporting,  
and your purpose go on being fulfilled.

Loving God,  
hear our prayers for all those in our world  
who seek to further your will here on earth –  
those who work for peace,  
who campaign for justice,  
who strive to relieve poverty,  
who fight for the hungry –  
all those who struggle for the oppressed and  
exploited,  
the under-privileged and all denied their  
proper rights.  
Prosper their efforts and grant them  
inspiration so that they may challenge people  
everywhere to give of themselves in the  
service of others.

Loving God,  
we bring before you the sick and suffering of  
our world,  
all those wrestling with illness in body, mind  
or spirit.

We pray for those afflicted in body –  
enduring physical pain,  
overwhelmed by disabling disease,  
waiting for an operation or further treatment  
and fearful of what the future may hold.

We pray for those afflicted in spirit –  
those who feel their lives to be empty,  
those whose confidence has broken down,  
those unable to cope with the pressures of  
daily life,  
the lonely, and all who are bereaved.

*Here I am, Lord ...*

In a moment of quiet, we bring before you particular people and situations on our hearts today, and the needs and concerns of our own lives ...

Living God,  
speak to each of them, as to us, in your still small voice of calm,  
grant us all your peace which passes all understanding,  
that quiet confidence which only you can bring,  
and so may our burdens be lifted  
and our souls refreshed.  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along**

I, the Lord of sea and sky (StF 663)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.*

*Is it I, Lord?*

*I have heard you calling in the night.*

*I will go, Lord,*

*if you lead me.*

*I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain;  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts are satisfied.  
I will give my life for them.  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord ...*

Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)

### DISMISSAL & BLESSING

May God who travels with us along the way  
of faith, bless us on our way.  
May God who thirsts for truth and justice,  
bless us with an insatiable thirst for the truth.  
May God who longs for us  
to enjoy life in all its fullness,  
bless us with a child-like delight in life in all its  
wonder.

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,  
be our way, our truth, our life  
now, and always. Amen

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