

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost 14 Matthew 20:1-16 Unexplainable Sacrifices and Veteran's day

The prima facie meaning of the parable is not clear. It is about workers with no work hired late in the day who are paid the same as those who started early and worked through the "heat of the day". It is a "prescribed riddle" that needs deep concentration in order to get in touch with its underlying meaning.

The parable is not about economic matters, although economic matters meant a great deal to the workers who had no work at all. It is not about working conditions and the effort that people put into the work, though those who were working all day quite rightly pointed out that it was unfair to give people who started at the end of the day the same pay that they received.

There is a riddle here, an enigma that boggles our minds. It may have been more comprehensible to Jesus and his band and to those who were from his own people, his opponents in this case. Psalm 78 speaks of such riddles, just as Paul speaks of the enigmas posed by our reflection on being human in I Corinthians 13.

What then does our focus on this parable have to tell us that relates to own experience?

We are considering today the heroes of our nation, particularly those who gave their lives. We enjoy the fruits of their sacrifice today, but they lost their tomorrows. There are many unsung heroes in every war, as well as those who betrayed the trust of their nation by using excessive cruelty, especially to people at their mercy and captives. Everyone who participates should be honoured, as the parable may suggest, but we tend to choose some to honour more than others. Perhaps we need icons to reflect in some way the best of what is an arduous and frightening experience.

The parable teaches the unlimited generosity of God and ponders on how inexplicable this is for us when life is so uneven.

We have learned from life and we have endeavoured to share our experience with others. We have passed on to our children the best that we can remember of the shared heritage of our people. This is not only about the heroes of war but those who have taught us what decency and respect means, what love means, what faith and trust in God can bring to human life. We have learned the hard way that so much of what we took into our very mental pores as young people has lasted the test of time. We have also learned that many of the things that we learned on the way through were only props in order to allow us to focus and to define our own reality of being in the world. We are all thrown into life, and we have to learn how to pick up the pieces that are thrown down in front of us in order to form and shape our life.

We have learned in the Church about things of Faith and the Scriptures and the Sacraments and Ministry and the heart-matters of believing in God. Some have walked many different paths on their journey to God. Others have walked away and muttered within the darkroom of their own disbelief about how they can find something that sustains them in their enforced atheism. Atheism requires a decision as much as faith in God requires a decision.

We have learned that even the beautiful things that we are being offered by Christ in the Church in the end tend to fall away and we are left with something that we didn't quite perceive when we began. That is, we are all called to trust in God. We learn to trust in a more considered way that we didn't know about when we were young, when we walked with assured steps and a faith that seemed so transparent to us. We were unable to fully comprehend what it all really meant.

We cannot comprehend at depth even now when we move on in the years of our lives. But we have learned to trust, not in a blind way, but in a way that suddenly brings before our sight things that we were never able to see before. This enables us to continue the journey, to fight the good fight, to keep alive the hope and dream of a better tomorrow. The parable reminds us that nothing can be fully worked out when it comes to deep issues on our human journey.

We need to look into the face of God of the face of humanity and to behold and hold the things that sustain us. We need to forget the things that have been done and said to us that have wounded our hearts and to emphasise the things that we have learned to appreciate. The people who brought me up taught me that we should never fail in the gift of appreciation. We may have different world-views than those who went before us and suffered and died for what they believed. We know may not believe the same things today, even some of the things for which they died. Many went in blind faith and courage, trusting that their nation would always give them the best thing to do to protect their people. We are more sceptical about such things today, but in the end a person who does not want to protect their own land does not have the love of country that the Greeks called *patriotes*.

This should never discredit any of the great gains of humanity in terms of seeking renewed strength, looking for love and dignity and joy on the journey. But without *patriotes* we lose our anchor of identity in the world and we find nothing to replace the feeling that goes through a citizen when they see the flag of their country raised. This should not be blind nationalism, covering up faults and weaknesses, but it is something that links us to the soil and to our part of it. We see the inequalities and we quite rightly resist them.

But in the end the greatest inequality of all is our inability of to take hold of the huge gifts that the Creator of the universe is throwing down in front of us and placing in our hearts through the Gifting Spirit all the time. This lies at the heart of the parable. Let us learn to trust and to run with the Master all the way to the heart of God. Let us also take issue on the journey with those who would rob us of our freedom and our dignity. May this also impel us to be mindful of the worth and dignity and significance of the feelings of those who may think differently to us, speak a different language, walk a different cultural path, or have no real conception of the matters that touch our soul. This will require a vastness of generosity that we have often failed to show so often on the journey. May we learn from the Lord of Life who wants to reward all of those whose needs are brought into the proximity of the heart of God.

Bishop Arthur Jones

TO PLAN:

Sept. 19, Monday.

- Finance Meeting, 5:30pm, Parish Office
- Vestry Meeting, 6:30pm, Rectory.

Sept. 20, Tuesday.

- Bible Study, 10am

Sept. 22, Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10am, Chapel

Sept. 24, Saturday.

- ECW Meeting, 1:00pm, Parish Hall

CONFIRMATION:

A confirmation class will be offered in the coming weeks. To those interested, a sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board by the Parish Office.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32; Psalm 25
Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:28-32