

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 26 October 2025 - The Last Sunday after Trinity

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Ecclesiasticus 35.12–17 or Jeremiah 14.7–10, 19–end; Psalm 84.1–7; 2 Timothy 4.6–8, 16–18; Luke 18.9–14

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Steven Rothwell, Clergy Development Officer

The opening verse of today's gospel passage (Luke 18:9) suggests that Jesus had a target audience for this parable:

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.

In the King James version that last phrase is translated “despised others.” That same verb in other places is translated “set at nought.” In other words, ‘zero’. Nothing. Not there. What we might term passive contempt.

Passive contempt is when we act as if the other person doesn't matter. We don't see them as a fellow human being. We don't see them as having concerns of their own, or needs, or desires, or feelings, or of being of any value, at all. As far as our actions are concerned, they are nothing.

This manifests itself in all sorts of ways. Using service people, the same as we would a machine. Ignoring the needs of anyone not connected to us in some way. Running our business to benefit us and our shareholders, with no regard to its impact on others. Designing our laws from only our point of view, to benefit only ourselves. Living our lives with blinkers on, unable to see people as people and not things.

When I think about Jesus, though, I have a sense that he saw *everybody*. And I mean *really* saw them, all of each of them. Each person as a unique creation of God. And he treated each of them the same — special and loved of God.

Perhaps that is the mark of the Jesus-follower. Not only have they moved past active contempt, they are constantly on guard against passive contempt as well. They live their lives aware of every person around them, connecting, *seeing*.

Consider this quote about love versus contempt from Elie Wiesel:

“The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.”

It's hard to imagine a more earnest, conscientious, religious person than the Pharisee. He prayed often, he fasted regularly, and he gave generously to help the needy. His spiritual regimen was stringent. He was actually a good man. We may be tempted to always typecast Pharisees as being hypocrites or at least unlikable. As far as we know, the Pharisee was a good man, a man who would diligently serve his community.

But he made two tragic mistakes in his religious life: one about himself, and one about other people, the combination of which is toxic to spirituality.

The first seems to be his attitude towards his neighbour in prayer, the publican. He might thank God that he is not like the publican out of a sense of genuine thankfulness and relief. In much the same way we might laugh at others' misfortune because actually we are so relieved that it is not us; but it could be and we know that and so we are relieved. That makes us feel a little bit better than they are.

His religious narcissism was a form of spiritual self-justification, of which there are almost endless permutations. It's scary to think about the many ways we try to justify ourselves before God, others, and our own selves. We'll invoke almost anything to justify ourselves — money ("I'm frugal toward myself and generous to others"), politics ("My vote is enlightened, yours is ideological"), maybe it's the way we think we care for others or the environment when others don't. Ethical self-justification assures me that "I'm better than the next person."

This passage is not about correcting ourselves from being glad we aren't like the next person, or indeed from lamenting that we aren't more like someone else. It's about realising *exactly who we are before God*. Like the tax collector who sees himself entirely as he is before God's presence. This insight is probably a rare thing; maybe it happens once in a while, it is rarefied and treasured.

This parable was and is an attempt to shift our attention from ourselves — our piety or our passions, our faith or our failure, our glory or our shame — to God, the God who delights in justifying the ungodly, welcoming the outcast, and healing all who are in need.

As soon as we embrace the notion that we're accepted by a good God, we never need to prove ourselves. To get to that place, Jesus says that we need only seven words — those mumbled by the tax collector as he stood at a distance and stared at the ground: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

It might be the only prayer we'll ever need. Because it proceeds from a clear-eyed appraisal of our human condition and, more importantly, from confidence in the character of a God who welcomes the secular sinner — and a God who even welcomes the self-righteous saint.

Charles Clayton Morrison. Christian writer and minister, wrote:

The church is the only institution in the world whose membership is based on unworthiness to be a member.

Let's welcome our unworthiness as we gather together in the presence of God who welcomes us anyway.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Intercessions (suitable for all ages) – Last Sunday after Trinity

Let us pray together for the Church, the world, and all in need, giving thanks for the gift of God's Word.

Loving God,

Thank you for this day. Help us to learn more about you and how to live with kindness, courage, and love. Help us to listen to your Word and let it shape our lives every day.

God of love:

Hear our prayer.

We pray for your Church all around the world. Help everyone who teaches and shares your Word to do so with joy and truth. Bless our leaders and helpers and help us all to work together to show your love in our communities.

God of love:

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the world and for those who make important decisions. May your Word guide them to act with fairness, wisdom, and care for all people. We pray for peace where there is conflict, and hope where there is fear.

God of love:

Hear our prayer.

We pray for our families, friends, neighbours, and schools. Help us to be kind and generous, and to look out for those who feel lonely or left out. Show us how to be your hands and feet in the world.

God of love:

Hear our prayer.

We pray for anyone who is sick, sad, or worried. In a moment of quiet, we think of people we know who need your help...

[Pause for silent prayer or invite people to name aloud]

Bring comfort and healing and surround them with your peace.

God of love:

Hear our prayer.

We remember those who have died, and we thank you for their lives. Help us to trust in your promise of eternal life, and to live each day with hope and love.

God of love:

Hear our prayer.

Gracious God,

Thank you for hearing our prayers. Help us to follow your Word and share your love with everyone we meet.

Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Lord, Thy Word Abideth – Henry W. Baker

O Word of God Incarnate – William W. How

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise – Walter Chalmers Smith

Christ is Made the Sure Foundation – Latin, tr. John Mason Neale

Shine Jesus Shine – Graham Kendrick

Just As I Am – Charlotte Elliott

Take My Life and Let It Be – Frances Ridley Havergal

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>

- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)