

Trinity 16. 24 September 2023.

Sermon: Our response to the generosity of God. Revd David Treharne

Philippians 1:21-end

Matthew 20:1-16: The Laborers in the Vineyard

Helen Ray spoke about Mitochondrial Awareness Week.

Lorna Theophilus spoke about being with us for the duration of her training.

Shane was recently baptised and shared his prayer written for his baptism.

Sermon: Our response to the generosity of God

The generosity of God is amazing!

In the parable last week (Matthew 18:21-35 The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant) we had a message of forgiveness and reconciliation, flowing from the forgiveness and reconciliation that is at the heart of God and the heart of our faith. God in his love and mercy sent Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is the one who shows mercy to the sinner, and he is the one who reconciles us to God. He reunites us with God.

We have heard through the book of Romans a message of grace... God's love freely given in and through Jesus. It is unmerited and undeserved yet still given in love.

God's love, God's mercy, God's grace, God's forgiveness... is generous beyond what we can grasp!

The overflowing wine at the wedding at Cana... the abundance of God

The feeding of the 5,000 with bread left to spare

The Cross and God giving his very self for love, for our redemption and for us to share in HIS life... in this life and beyond this life. God coming to be where we are in order to take us to be where he is. God becoming what we are in order that we might become what he is.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The provision of God's creation – an abundance for all to share.

This generous love of God means that we are able to gather and worship and praise and pray in the presence of the Holy One, despite our past, despite our present, despite our sin, despite our mistakes, despite our compromise. This generosity of God to those who do not deserve it. To those who have not earned it.

Today, Jesus tells the parable of the Vineyard to help us better understand how generous and merciful God is and to help us better understand the nature of his Kingdom, and how his reign operates.

What is the response to such generosity?

The Generosity of God, the economy of God is a challenge to us as it is not the way we do things in the world. "My ways are not your ways says the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

People joining the vineyard late and getting the same reward might leave us unsettled and possibly uncomfortable.

One person commented on reading this parable... *"When I hear the words of Jesus in this Sunday's parable, I am reminded of the problem we have with generosity. We want to control it, to manage it, and to conform it to our vision of what and who is worthy of it"*

It might even make us angry... a bit like the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! ***For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!***'

In the vineyard parable today they complain instead to the landowner, "You have made them [the one-hour workers] equal to us."

- That might well wind us up! "Look what I've done and what I am doing for you Lord." We are all equal recipients of God's love and grace and God's gifts. Yet we are often covetous and jealous when God's gifts of forgiveness and life are given in equal measure to others.

It very much shows how our ways are not God's ways... and we need conversion.

- It is very interesting and important for us to notice that both the vineyard parable and the prodigal parable arouses resentment among those whose needs are already met.

Do we not see it amongst ourselves with those who are hungry or homeless? Those who well fed, well off and with good homes, are indignant when essential needs are met in others.

God's generosity is a Vision and Motivation for us

If we can grasp it God's generosity and grace sets out a vision and gives us motivation to live differently and work for a better world. The parable doesn't just have a spiritual meaning but also an economic and daily life meaning. It's not just about people coming to faith at the end of their lives... the 11th hour conversation and getting all the benefits of heaven. It's about God's economy infiltrating the way we do life day to day... God's Kingdom on earth.

As Paul says it's about living one's life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. (Phi 1:27). Responding to the generosity of God, the abundance of God, the mercy and grace and compassion of God. It's your Kingdom Come Lord... your reign on earth as it is in heaven.

So what might us grasping God's generosity look like in our lives?

Canon Andrew Braddock reminded the Diocese a year or so ago that Archbishop William Temple was inspired to write his pamphlet Christianity and Social Order.

"Published towards the end of 1942, Temple set out a compelling vision for the provision of universal access to healthcare, education, decent housing, proper working conditions and adequate leisure time.

Temple's booklet influenced William Beveridge, whose Beveridge Report, focusing on tackling the five 'giant evils' of squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease, set the agenda for post-war politics and the creation of the welfare state."

It might look like Lorna or Shane or Mike or Charlotte or Emrys: They have all recently given themselves wholly to Christ and are on the journey of being holy. Learning God's ways. Entering and living life according to that economy of grace that has been received. Freely you have received, freely give.

It might look like Helen who is highlighting the challenges of those living with Mitochondrial disease and the challenges of their families.

It might look like Christian giving and charity. Giving our financial backing, time and talents from what God has given to us to help and assist and bless others, to build up the church and our communities.

God's generosity manifest in our lives might look like public service or volunteering.

It might look like giving and not expecting a return. It might look like Hospitality and welcome. Blessing others with an invite, with a meal, with a gift not because they have given one to you, or because you want one back... but just to be generous in sharing. That's the reason for the Harvest lunch next week. It free but it costs something... just like the of grace of God in Christ!

It might look like welcoming and embracing the sinners, the backsliders and the late comers to the church... because God rejoices over every sinner that repents no matter how late in life.

It might look like forgiveness; taking the initiative to forgive when someone has wronged you even if there is no acknowledgement or response from them.

St Paul responded to the generosity of God with his whole self. Verse 21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.

Have we grasped the generosity of God? Are you able to accept what God freely gives? Are we ready and willing to respond as God's people... and live life in a manner worthy of the Gospel that we have received and that we proclaim?

Notices

Thanks to Helen and Lorna and Shane

Funeral of Margaret Smith: Thursday 12 Oct, 12noon at St Luke's and 1.30pm at Forest Crem.

1st Oct. Harvest Thanksgiving – an opportunity for generosity. Gifts of food and household provisions can be given for the Pantry at St Luke's for people in the parish in need, and/or items can be given to the Foodbank.

Hog roast next Sunday: If you signed up at the end of church or have contacted Annabelle, Nicholette or Emma to say that you would like to attend. Our Free Harvest Hog Roast will be taking place at 12.30pm on Sunday 1st October at either Tutshill School or St. Luke's (tbc). Please bring your own drinks and if you could stretch to bring a pud' to share, I'm sure that the sweet toothed amongst us would be very grateful!!! This is to say a MASSIVE THANK YOU for all of your amazing volunteering and contributions to our Community. Thank you all!!!- Vicar David.

PS. If you have NOT signed up please contact Nicholette (Nicholetteflatman@gmail.com) or Emma (Emmad.cyfm@gmail.com) to check availability.