ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord.

Should they cry to me in any distress, I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;

you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.

COLLECT

O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law upon love of you and of our neighbour, grant that, by keeping your precepts, we may merit to attain eternal life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 55:6-9

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. Let the wicked man abandon his way, the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him, to our God who is rich in forgiving; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways - it is the Lord who speaks.

Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 144

Response:

The Lord is close to all who call him.

I will bless you day after day and praise your name for ever. The Lord is great, highly to be praised, his greatness cannot be measured. (R.)

The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love. How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures. (R.)

The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, who call on him from their hearts. (R.)

SECOND READING Philippians 1:20-24:27

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians.

Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or by my death. Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more; but then again, if living in this body means doing work which is having good results - I do not know what I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for vour sake.

Avoid anything in your everyday lives that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Blessings on the King who comes, in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens!

GOSPEL Matthew 20:1-16

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, 'You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage.' So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' 'Because no one has hired us' they answered. He said to them, 'You go into my vineyard too.' In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first.' So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. 'The men who came last' they said 'have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat.' He answered one of them and said, 'My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last-comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?' Thus the last will be first, and the first, last."

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God. the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,

the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father:

through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven.

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

he suffered death and was buried. and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive with favour, O Lord, we pray, the offerings of your people, that what they profess with devotion and faith may be theirs through these heavenly mysteries.

Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

You have laid down your precepts to be carefully kept; may my ways be firm in keeping your

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Graciously raise up, O Lord, those you renew with this Sacrament, that we may come to possess your redemption

both in mystery and in the manner of our life. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.







Matthew gives another parable about the Lord, this time about the divine generosity. It is about how the Lord responds to people's needs, not to any supposed merit on their part.

Perhaps we should note first of all the situation of many workers at the time of Jesus (and that the same applies today in many parts of the world). It is one of what we would call casual labour: the workers are not employed on a contract, they have no guarantee of work (and therefore of payment) from one day to the next. Those able to work gather at an appointed place first thing in the morning and the foreman comes to select those whom he deems most fit for the task in hand. The rest have to wait until another employer's official comes and does the same, hoping that they will be able to earn enough to feed their families that day. The men in the parable are not loafing around because they cannot be bothered working, but as the final group answer the landowner, No-one has hired us. They are able and willing, but have not been given a chance.

We might well have a sneaking sympathy for the workers who have been in the vineyard for twelve hours and borne the heat of the day. It hardly seems fair that the last arrivals should be given the same wages as they are awarded. But the landowner appreciates that the needs of those hired at the eleventh hour are just as great as those given work in the early morning. The parable is an illustration of the gospel teaching that *the last shall be first*. The landowner is fair in his dealings with the original group, he gives them the sum on which they agreed, which shows God's justice. By awarding the workers hired at the end of the day the same amount, Matthew demonstrates God's mercy.

The balance between justice and mercy is not always easy to strike. When the first group complain about their treatment, the landowner asks *Is your eye evil because I am good?* The image of the evil eye suggests a lack of generosity. ■

REFLECT

nderlying the parable is the theme of the Last Judgment. There is also the tension throughout the gospel narratives between the religiously correct people and Jesus who associates with those who are regarded as beyond the pale, usually referred to as *tax collectors and sinners*, but who gather round Jesus to hear his message. In our own Christian communities today we can find an attitude that those who have kept the rules all their lives should somehow be given a greater reward than those who have come to the Church later in life. On a human level, this is understandable: but God is beyond our comprehension. This is not a way of avoiding the question: it is simply a well-accepted theological fact. It may well be that, in the end, it is better for us to rely on God being generous and merciful than on God acting by strict justice.

LEARN

The expression the kingdom of heaven is sometimes Matthew's way of avoiding using the Lord's name, a custom which the Jews believe shows respect for the sacred Name.

The parable, commonly known as The Workers in the Vineyard, could perhaps be more aptly called The Good Employer.

The workers were not lazy or idle: they were willing to work, but depended on someone hiring them for the day.

The kingdom also means God's gift to give: we must not begrudge God's generosity.

DO

Think for a little about your attitude to the unemployed. Do you share the striver/shirker way of looking at people in and out of work? Is there any way in which you could help someone to acquire a skill or opportunity which would help them find work?



SAY

The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds.