

Light Your Candle

There is a table here with a place set for you. A table of fine indulgence. Wherever you have come from and whatever you have left behind, this space has your name on the place-card and we bid you welcome. God bids you welcome. You belong.

Acknowledgement of Country

*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

This table of belonging is for us all. We give thanks to the First Peoples of this land and this place. We pay our respects to the elders past and present, and to those emerging. May we gather together closely around this gathering table.

Call to Worship

How can this be?
Loved and welcomed
by the one who is Love itself.
Come and gather around the feast
that meets every need.
Are you the least?
You will be first.
Draw near to the Lord.
Draw near. Draw near.

Hymn : Morning has broken TIS 156

Morning has broken
like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing,
praise for the morning,
praise for them, springing
fresh from the word.

Sweet the rain's new fall
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall
on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
of the wet garden,
sprung from completeness
where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight;
mine is the morning
born of the one light
Eden saw play.
Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's recreation
of the new day.

*Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Eleanor Farjeon
1881-1965 BUNESSAN*

Opening prayer

Worship is service, is worship. You call us to speak boldly, and to faithful and fruitful service. We come to share together in abundance and the joy you give us in faith and in love.

Prayer of confession

You give us such a shake up. The first are last? The last are first. That is not how we have acted at all!

You have provided all we need to sustain us and nourish us.

But we have complained and acted as though your provision was scarce.

Every step of the way you have accompanied us. What more do we need?
But we have complained and acted as though your provision was scarce.

You have taken us from past struggles and guided us to a place of newness and promise.

But we have complained and acted as though your provision was scarce.

We are so far off being of the same mind as you. Remind us again that grace is all we need, for your grace is sufficient for us.

Your grace meets all our needs and graciously allows us to be fully present to others.

In grace we dare to ask your forgiveness for acting as though scarcity at your table was 'a thing', and as though the first were the first and the last were unimportant.

Words of affirmation

In grace you say "Forgive what?
You are already forgiven".
Wow, **Thanks be to God.**

The Readings

Exodus 16: 2-15

Matthew 20: 1-16



For these words of faith
and Jesus the Word,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection Rev Ian Turnidge

After this pandemic is over,

- What do you long to do?
- Where do you long to go?
- What do you want?

Take a moment and answer that for yourself.

I want to walk without a mask. I want to go to the gym again. I want to eat at the Thai café again. I want to go op-shopping. I want to enjoy the company of others.

The horrific thing about my little list is that it's all about me. I'm afraid that the bigger, deeper things, the more life-giving things that I have discovered during this

COVID lock-down may be lost and discarded, if I'm not careful.

I want to keep things like the spaciousness of time: of having a diary that can make space easily and that maybe some meetings can work on-line into the future! I want to keep space in the day for intentional walking around the neighbourhood. Times of stillness and watching. Time to sit and read: to pray and read the Bible. In the future, I want to keep this 'less running about' and more space to think. These things have been the gifts of the shutdown for me.

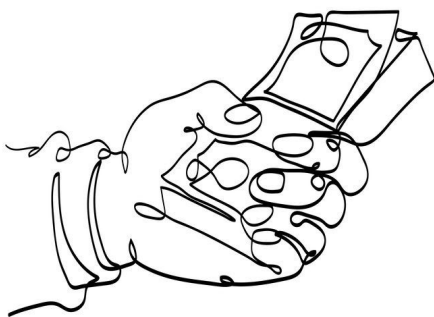


The way our lives had emerged pre-Covid-19, we had normalised the daily bought coffee, the weekly restaurant meal: the Saturday takeaway: and then we normalised our annual overseas trip: and our 'escape winter' lifestyle. These were the normal. We even used shopping as a social activity; rather than a weekly shop, something familiar to our younger years, shopping had become an entertainment activity; even daily for groceries. We have created a life very different to what we grew up in. The world is an economy, and we are agents in it. We are valued for what we contribute to the seasonal sales figures: we are valued for the money we spend. Or earn.

We can't underestimate how this view of a transactional economy we live in affects the way we imagine, and how we live, in the world.

This pandemic has been the first major time since the modern era where the economy has had to take a back seat, while we have been forced to attend to the public health of the society as the priority. And countries who have not been able to prioritise public health have seen the numbers of sick rise exponentially. And those who have become sick or died have been disproportionately skewed towards the vulnerable: or the least 'productive' in our community. This transactional, *'everything has a dollar value'* world in which we live, informs our expectations subliminally as much as it informs our 1st world view and expectations.

Today's Gospel story speaks right into the transactional values that we expect, and perhaps reveals to us that the founding theories of Liberalism and Western Democracies are not entirely Kingdom values.



In the story today, each worker receives the same wage for work done, regardless of whether the person worked all day, half a day, or just in the last hour! All get the daily wage.

And we are outraged! So are the workers! I recognise that I hold transactional expectations in my own life:

When I finished at my work as a beauty therapist, the brand gave me a lovely morning tea with 4 work-mates and a wonderful farewell gift: and after 24 years of life and service with them, it was right and lovely, and gratefully received. When I finished at the theatre company after 17 years: not even a card!...And that left an after-taste! I clearly have a transactional expectation, even though I know that farewells are not written into employment contracts: they are gestures of the love and respect we have for each other and the meaning in life that work provides.

These transactional ideas play through into our faith life too: very subtly in our faith too! We can even think of God transactionally: that our salvation and the grace in which we live is somehow determined on an imagined ledger of good works and a tick list God might be flicking off. And if by chance we don't have enough ticks...well then, maybe we are in trouble: maybe God doesn't like us or we're not good enough anymore?

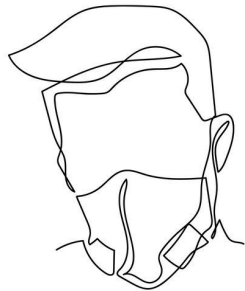
That's not the Christian Gospel.

And today's parable wants to break that open for us!

It really shouldn't be such a shock for us, after all, every week we pray "give us this day our daily bread". Just enough for today. No more, no less. That my enough ensures that there is enough for all in the world. The landowner pays each worker their daily wage: enough for the day. A fairness that gives meaning and worth for the worker. No more, no less. Perhaps the parable is also a stark reminder that

our concept of 'fair' leaves some with nothing?

The pandemic, in the early days with toilet paper, and recently with fresh meat and produce, saw people panic buying. Or what you and I might call being greedy. I understand the panic and the fear: we were all afraid. But for some people, their fear meant that other people had none. And there was well enough for all to go around, if people would just be calm. The supermarkets didn't intervene: they saw it as an opportunity to make money fast. It was only weeks after the shelves were stripped bare that they began helping people manage their fear, by rationing supplies to one or two items per person. Perhaps even the supermarkets began to see a moral compass on what is fair: and first in, with the most, doesn't bring about fairness for a community?



This week a person knocked on my door. At the moment, we are not allowed to have visitors in our homes, so we talked from the doorstep, respecting social distancing, in our masks. In the course of our conversation they said to me "I guess I'm not a good Christian. I know I mustn't be a good Christian." I was a little taken back by that statement. Paul reminds us in his letter to the church in Rome, that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. No matter how we judge ourselves; or what we expect of ourselves.

Or how we compare ourselves. This parable challenges us in living the dignity we have, in the grace we have received. It challenges us to live the 'now' of the daily dread. It redeems each person's human worth in the work they undertake. A day's wage, so that all people might have enough.

How might this influence our hopes for a post-pandemic world: so that everyone can enjoy the fullness of life once again?



Prayers of the people

In prayer we bring before God all the workers of the world and we ask that they have what they need to fulfil the tasks before them, and that they be blessed in the work that they offer:

Those who work to feed others: the farmers, growers, gatherers and sellers, the bakers and the makers.

Those who work to heal and nurture others: the parents, caregivers, nurses, doctors and allied health workers.

Those who work to rebuild after disaster: the rescue and recovery teams, the medics and chaplains, the news teams and locals.

Those who work to bring about new discoveries: the scientists and deep thinkers, the researchers.

Those who work to delight, nourish and challenge our souls: the artists and poets, the dancers and actors, the filmmakers

and presenters, the creators and crafters,
the priests and ministers.

Those who work to restore habitats and
care for creatures and the environment:
the botanists and rangers, the vets and
wildlife shelters.

Those who work to shelter and connect
others: the builders and planners, the aid
agencies and organisations, the postal
service.

Those who work to lead others in
government, workplaces and
communities: the presidents and prime
ministers, the CEO's and Boards, the
bosses and the managers.

Those who work for justice: the lawyers
and the police, the social justice activists
and the advocates, the judges and the JPs.

Those who work in situations of abuse
and danger: the victims of violence and
those who intervene, the front-line health
workers, those in places where war is
generational.

And for those who would work but can't
and are looking and waiting for work,
and those who can't work and struggle,
and for those who are retired from work,
bless them all.

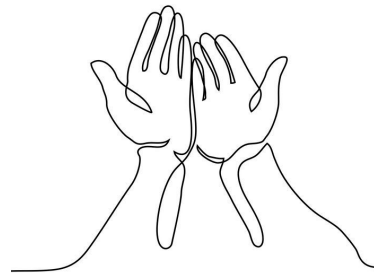
Bless the workers of the world,
God of justice and compassion.
Let their work be meaningful and fruitful
for themselves and for us all,

as we bring all prayer, together in

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours
now and for ever. Amen.



Offering

We are given all we need. Let's share that
with each other and with others around
us. Life and worship equals service.

God who strikes the rock and the waters
flow, let us be generous with the blessings
with which you shower us. We pray for a
world where all can eat, and be sheltered
and loved. Take what we can offer and
use it for your Kingdom of Love.

Notices

Do you have a good story to share?
Has someone offered you compassion
or unexpected kindness?
Make sure you tell them
how much that mattered to you.
Tell someone else the story too
and share the love.

If you'd like to join worship "On-Line" you
can access a version of the Shearwater
service from St John's Uniting Cowes here:
<http://cowes.unitingchurch.org.au/index.php>

The Gippsland Presbytery have other
worship resources here:

<https://gippsland.unitingchurch.org.au>

Hymn: And can it be? TiS 209

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain -
for me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

'Tis mystery all! The immortal dies:
who can explore this strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
let angel minds inquire no more.

He left his Father's throne above
(so free so infinite his grace!),
emptied himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all immense and free:
for O my God, it found out *me*.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night:
thine eye diffused a quickening ray-
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

No condemnation now I dread:
Jesus and all in him is mine!
Alive in him my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach the eternal throne,
and claim the crown through, Christ my
own.

*Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Charles Wesley
1707-88 alt.*

Blessing

Pilgrims on the Way...It is a long journey
which seems to take us a long way from
home. "If only...", we gasp. There are You,
meeting us at the point of our need, and
in love you point out that we have
enough. Way more than enough, and
home is where we are headed to. Be with
us in our struggles Ever-Present God of
Grace. Lead us on.

People of God, be of the same mind.
Empty yourselves and be leaky
receptacles of the Grace and Love God
shares with you.

Go into life. God stands there in front of
you and leads you forward, on into
newness and life.

