



## **Worship resources Trinity 15**

The lectionary changes tack a little this week – at least from the perspective of the Gospel. While the continuous Old Testament readings continue to follow the Israelites in the desert (with a similar story to last week's, but focussed on water and thirst, rather than food and hunger), Matthew describes a moment of confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders, in which two questions are raised – where Jesus' authority originates, and who is finding their way into God's Kingdom. The water image becomes a captivating one for this week's worship – because like water that flows into any crack it can find, and that is not easily controlled or contained, God's reign appears in surprising places, and flows into the lives of those that we might prefer to keep out of God's kingdom.

May we be challenged and inspired by the radical, offensive inclusivity of God's reign this week.

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**The First Reading** - Exodus 17: 1-7

The Israelites complain that they have no water, and Moses takes their complaint to God. God instructs Moses to strike the rock at Horeb with his staff and water flows out for the people to drink.

**The Psalm** - Psalm 78: 1-4, 12-16

A teaching psalm reminding God's people of all that God has done, bringing God's people out of Egypt, leading with a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day, and splitting open the rock to give them water to drink.

**The Second Reading** - **Philippians 2: 1-13**

Paul is in prison, glad of opportunities to speak of Jesus to his guards. he still feels intimately linked to the Christians in Philippi, and his own humiliating circumstances inspire him to a much-loved reflection on the humility of Christ incoming in share human experience in order to unite us to God.

### **The Gospel Reading - Matthew 21: 23-32**

Jesus speaks with more authority than any prophet of former times, and more than John the Baptist. And his message in this Gospel is much the same as theirs, and the same today: every person who turns away from sin and turns to Christ will be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Exodus%2017:%201-7%0Acw%20Psalm%2078:%201-4,%2012-16%0APhilippians%202:%201-13%0AMatthew%2021:%2023-32](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Exodus%2017:%201-7%0Acw%20Psalm%2078:%201-4,%2012-16%0APhilippians%202:%201-13%0AMatthew%2021:%2023-32)

### **COLLECTS OF THE DAY**

#### **Collect One**

Keep, we beseech thee,  
O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy;  
and, because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall,  
keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful,  
and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### **Collect Two**

God,  
who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit  
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:  
Grant that your people may be fervent  
in the fellowship of the gospel;  
that, always abiding in you,  
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

You have promised that where two or more of us are gathered in your name, you will be in our midst, O Christ. May we be certain of your presence now as we

pray our heartfelt "Amen."

God of Love, you see the suffering of your people and suffer with them. Be with those who minister to them for the sake of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

God of the Poor, you desire that all might have life and have it abundantly. Where your children suffer inhuman wages, sub-standard medical care and inadequate housing, be quick to bring your blessing, justice and peace. Use us as

agents of your salvation for the sake of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

God of Faithfulness, be with all in our parish who wrestle with questions of faith. Let them know that if death cannot separate you from your children, neither

can doubt nor even unbelief. For the sake of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

God of New Life, your goodness fills our world to overflowing. Let your Holy Spirit rest upon those preparing for *baptism/confirmation* in our parish, especially \_\_\_\_\_, as they seek to renounce the evil one and live as children of God. For the sake of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

God of Death and Resurrection, your arms embrace all people. Help those who

have lost their spouse, their child or a parent find new hope and give them your

Spirit to aid them in their grief. For the sake of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

As we turn to you for help, O Lord, help us also to turn to our sisters and brothers in faith. May we be for one another a community in whose midst you become flesh. **Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

*Presider or deacon*

Giving glory to God our Father through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the company of the holy angels, let us pray for all the concerns of the world.

*Deacon or other leader*

For *N* our bishop and *N* our rector/presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For candidates for public office and for mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For abundant fruits of the earth and for this good and bountiful world.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our city/town/parish and those who live in it and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all those in desperate need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those who rest in Christ.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For pardon for all our transgressions.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Lifting our voices with all creation and all the angels, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

God, who calls on us to do your will in the vineyards of this world, hear the prayers we offer this day and receive all peoples into your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **POST COMMUNION**

Eternal God,  
we have received these tokens of your promise.  
May we who have been nourished with holy things  
live as faithful heirs of your promised kingdom.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **PRAYERS**

God of all who wander in the wilderness,  
you go before us as beacon and guide.  
Lead us through all danger,  
sustain us through all desolation,  
and bring us home to the land  
you have prepared for us. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,  
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens  
and healed our spirits.  
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,  
those seeking healing,  
those in need within the church and the world.  
As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,  
and guided them in the way of your love,  
so listen now to those who call upon you.  
Move us to praise your gracious will,  
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death  
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Welcoming God,  
you receive and bless all  
who come to you in humility.  
Show us our false pride,  
that we may repent of all conceit and arrogance  
and, caring for one another,  
may honor Jesus  
to the glory of your name. Amen.

God of our salvation,  
we falter before the demands of your word  
and turn away from your call to life.  
Pour out your mercy on us  
as you showed mercy to your people of old,  
that we may turn from our sinfulness  
and walk the path of self-emptying love  
make known in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Redeeming Sustainer,  
visit your people  
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,  
that we may hurry to make you welcome  
not only in our concern for others,  
but by serving them  
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Grant, O merciful God,  
That Your Church,  
Being gathered by Your Holy Spirit into one,  
May show forth Your power among all peoples,  
To the glory of Your Name;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Who lives and reigns  
With You and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and for ever. Amen.  
*(from Common Order)*

### **Christian stewardship**

Father, we, too, have said we want to follow your teachings and show your love to the world, but we still resist. Help our hearts and our bodies follow our words, not just saying we will be your body, but by doing your work and returning part of your abundance so that your work may truly be done. Amen.  
*(Matthew 21:23-32)*

### **Offertory Prayer**

Through the giving of our money,  
And the giving of our lives,  
Through the giving of our words,  
And the giving of our actions,  
May the world be blessed and healed  
And be made whole.  
May goodness and hopefulness be encouraged.

May those named and unnamed who call upon the Lord today,  
Be blessed.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

### ***Philippians 2:1-13:***

"if then there is any (*fill in the blank*) in Christ . . . be of the same mind, having the same love." Paul says that whatever in Christ there is, we should be like-minded. A good strategy!

"did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited" I find this such a unique statement. Imagine if Christ had used his equality to exploit? What would that look like? Perhaps this is what the devil was [tempting](#) Christ to do - to exploit his equality.

"emptied himself" Emptying ourselves.

"every knee should bend . . . every tongue should confess." Hm. This is one of those passages often used by people who are seeking to convert non-Christians and those of other faith traditions as proof or encouragement about the task at hand. Frankly, it makes me a bit uncomfortable. If the idea is that people will • ultimately be moved to worship Jesus even against their will, I'm not sure I'd want to see that display...

"work out your own salvation" - this ends up being a very Wesleyan sentiment - obviously, Paul does not mean that we save ourselves, but he means to remind us that we are active participants in the justifying and sanctifying grace that should mark our lives as people of faith.

### ***Matthew 21:23-32:***

"by what authority" - the priests and elders want to know why Jesus thinks he "has the right" to teach as he's teaching. Who is he? Who's 'backing' him?

I love this, this trick Jesus sets them up for. Jesus himself knows the answer to his own question, doesn't he? But he traps them in a way that makes it impossible to answer. I think Jesus was having a good time here.

Jesus says - it is more important what you *do* than what your *lips claim* you believe. Did you hear that?

"change your minds" from the Greek *metemele<sup>te</sup>*, which means "to repent" - this is not the typical word used for repentance/"change of minds" in the New Testament. It is usually *metanoeo<sup>te</sup>*, but the gist of the

meaning is the same. But typically, NRSV translates the meaning as "repent" as opposed to this more literal rendering (preferred to me) of "change your minds."

*By Beth Quick*

## LECTIONARY NOTES 2

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

The image of water can be a helpful way into the theme for this week. Although it is only mentioned in the Moses reading in Exodus and in the related Psalm, it is reminiscent of Jesus' words in John that he offers living water. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus' response to the question of authority and his parable both indicate that, like the water from the rock, God's living water cannot be contained or controlled. Though the religious leaders would like to be the gatekeepers for God's reign, Jesus indicates that in the very act of doing this, they exclude themselves, while those who would seem to be excluded find their way in. This openness, inclusivity and welcome is characteristic of Jesus and his ministry, as described by Paul in his letter to the Philippians. This ancient hymn which describes Jesus' servanthood and self-sacrifice is Paul's call to treat one another with love and welcome. Finally, in the Ezekiel reading, and its related Psalm (25) God's ways are offered as the doorway to God's abundant, irrepressible life. Like water that finds the smallest of cracks to flow through, and that bursts out in even the most surprising places (a rock in the wilderness), so God's life – God's living water – flows into any life that has even the smallest crack open to it, and brings life and refreshing and welcome and inclusion.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** Who is 'in' and who is 'out' is the essential question of political and economic systems. In South Africa this is playing out in a number of ways – who gets to be 'in' the loop of information; who gets to 'own' the legacy of Nelson Mandela; who counts as a 'true' South African and who doesn't. In other countries similar issues are at play – who is a "real American" or a "true Brit"? Who gets to decide how things like debt and immigration and war get decided? On a global scale the question of who gets to share in processes and resources become even more difficult and important. As we face real issues with thirst through contamination of water sources, real issues of hunger, disease, displacement and hatred, the need for greater levels of inclusivity and transparency, and greater participation by ordinary citizens becomes increasingly important. In the Moses story the challenge is that water is provided freely for all, in spite of their grumbling, doubt and complaining. In the Gospel, Jesus makes it clear that God's grace is available to all, and that even those who are least likely to find a place belong, in spite of the attempts of the elite to keep them out. Ultimately, the



world and its resources belong to all people. The challenge this week is how to live out of this truth in real and practical ways. Perhaps it begins by simply recognising that all people are our neighbours and are as deserving as we are to have their needs met and provided for. Then, this realisation must find its way into our conversation, our civil participation and our routines of spending, consuming and discarding the things we use each day. It must also find its way into a life of radical hospitality in which we welcome all in Christ's name in whatever small, practical ways we can, while celebrating our differences and sharing God's grace. Ultimately, we have learned that the system of control by the few doesn't work – it inevitably gets undermined by ordinary citizens. We've seen this in music, publishing, dissemination of information and places of tyranny. So, the more we can open the doors – both of faith and of distribution of the world's resources – the closer we get to experiencing God's reign, and the closer we get to a peaceful, hospitable planet.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** The radical inclusivity of Christ, and the constant, consistent merciful care of God for the fickle Israelite people, can be tough for us to swallow. We wrestle with the uniqueness of Christ, and the challenging message he preached, on one side, and the seemingly indiscriminate welcome he offered on the other. We like to feel like we are 'chosen', that we are 'in', and that we have the 'right way', but we need to be careful of becoming like the religious leaders who tried to be gatekeepers for God's reign and ended up excluding only themselves. We need to be careful of judging others by their doubts or complaints, and trying to keep God's blessing for ourselves, only to find the living water flowing out to them in the most unexpected ways. We may think we find life by "protecting" ourselves and our faith, by keeping out those who we consider "unsavoury", but in fact these are our ways, not God's (as Ezekiel describes) and they do not lead us to life. Rather, it is in radical grace (like God in the wilderness and like Christ) and radical hospitality that life is found. These are God's ways, and they always lead us into the abundant life God's promised. So, the questions the Scriptures raise for us this week are these: Who would we prefer to keep out? Who do we allow to have authority and from whom do we withhold grace and authority? Who might be finding their way into God's reign in spite of us, and how can we change to become helpers rather than hinderers? And, finally, how can a greater openness to the unpredictable flow of God's living water, of God's grace, lead us deeper into God's life (in spite of our fears that it might somehow 'compromise' God's life)? God's authority, it is clear, does not need the recognition of the powers that be – thank God. But, this means, we had better be careful of becoming too friendly with any system or community that centralises power, authority or resources too much.

## SERMON OUTLINE

### **Matt 21:23-32 The Two Sons....**

Jesus develops the question of authority & obedience... *By what authority are you doing these things?* trick question ...

**1. The Problem:-** work!! v28 *Son, go & work today in the vineyard* - such work began in Spring - pruning; grapes were picked July to Oct... God challenges all of us to *Go work etc...* Millions have responded positively! Still the Mandate and Mission of the Church...

**2. The Practice: Son 1** – was very rude v29 *I will not* - unthinkable - shocking to the Eastern mind - could be condemned to death! But *later he changed his mind and went*. He repented - thought twice - and in so doing represents v31 *tax-collectors & prostitutes* - sinners responding to God's call...

**3. The Promise: Son 2** - v30 *I will sir, but he did not go* - empty promise - lip service - represents *chief priests and elders of the people* - outward show & empty religious observance - hypocrites frequently condemned by Christ – eg **Lk 6.46** *why do you call me Lord and do not do what I say?* Humble obedience is required in a ready heart...

**4. The Profession** - of faith - loyal service to the Master...

**a) a response that is ready & positive** - what God expects

**cf Isaiah** *Who will go for us? Here am I. Send me.*

**b) a response that is real & practical** - cf apostles of X - & missionaries in every age & generation...

Neither son in parable made the ideal response....

How obedient are we? How responsive to authority of X?

*By Norman Porteous*

## ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

### **Day One**

A Passion for Christ's World - sermon based on the Philippians reading for today. The preacher states: Paul's Passion is overflowing in this passage from his letter to his dear friends in Philippi. In this brief passage, Paul lifts before us The Ideal of Christ, who is God's Fiery Love for Humankind. Paul shares with them a beautiful early Christian hymn of faith in verses 5-11"... which the preacher extols as Love in Action.

"Paul tells us that we are to engage Christ's world with three expectations in mind.

"The first is Unity. We engage the world together as Christians...

“The second is with Respect. We will not always like other people, but we are called to respect them as persons...

“The third is with Regard. We will strive to understand their circumstances and respond to their needs.”

His conclusion is that there are three stages to the service path for Christians: The first is Charity; the second is Advocacy which emerges from Charity, and the Third is Justice.

[http://day1.org/1112-a\\_passion\\_for\\_christs\\_world](http://day1.org/1112-a_passion_for_christs_world)

### **The Blame Game**

'It wisnae me!' Have you ever played the Blame Game? Let me tell you how it goes: something goes wrong; whose fault is it? ... Useful sermon on Ezekiel 18:1-32.

[www.jgpc.org.uk/sermons/ezk%2018.pdf](http://www.jgpc.org.uk/sermons/ezk%2018.pdf)

## **CHILDREN**

### **Idea**

Explore with the children, through examples, what it means to trust. Who are the people we trust, and why do we trust them? If we trust someone, what does that mean we do, or think, or feel, and how does it make us behave?

If we promise to do something, what are the consequences if we break that promise? Simply telling children the parable of the two sons, as Jesus taught it, without much embellishment, might be enough. Let the story speak for itself!

### **Sermons4kids**

Riddle me this - Jesus stumps the chief priests and elders with a riddle. Objects needed: A sponge, a hand towel, and a glove. The preacher asks the children a number of riddles - to which the answer is likely to be - we don't know. Concludes by suggesting that the chief priests etc could only say in response to Jesus' questions - We don't know.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/riddle-me-this.html>

## **HYMN SUGGESTIONS**

[Rock Of Ages Cleft For Me](#)

[Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah](#)

[As Pants The Hart For Cooling Streams](#)

[All Are Welcome](#)

[There's A Wideness In God's Mercy](#)

[All Who Are Thirsty](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[As The Deer](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Your Grace Is Enough](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Everyone Belongs](#)

[Only In You](#)