

Resources for Parish Worship

INTRODUCTIONS

These may be included in the Parish Magazine, in the weekly service sheet, or by the lector as an introduction to the readings.

Deuteronomy 30 : 15-20

Behind all the legal systems God has led us to create, says

Moses, each of you has a life-or-death choice: to serve God, or not. We shall hear Jesus describe this as an attitude of mind: your own way for your life, or God's way.

**Forgive, settle matters quickly,
do not be angry,**



1 Corinthians 3 : 1-9

Paul's unruly converts in Corinth found it hard to throw off old habits and discover new ways of Christian living. He wants them to acquire a grown-up maturity in this new kind of life, and most of all to grow out of childish petulance and judgmentalism.

Matthew 5 : 21-37

Laws are necessary in every society; they and the lawyers have authority. Jesus claims an authority greater than theirs, and says anything and everything malicious violates God's way of kingdom living. You have a life-or-death choice to make: life with God or death without him.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

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http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Deuteronomy%2030:%2015-20%0Acw%20Psalm%20119:%201-8%0A1%20Corinthians%203:%201-9%0AMatthew%205:%2021-37

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Lord,
we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church
in continual godliness;
that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities,
and devoutly given to serve thee in good works,
to the glory of thy name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
who alone can bring order
to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity:
Give your people grace
so to love what you command
and to desire what you promise;
that, among the many changes of the world,
our hearts may surely there be fixed
where true joys are to be found;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Call to prayer

Our Lord Jesus constantly prayed to his heavenly Father, even for his enemies. Let us pray to the Father for all people.

The regular response, OR:

Listen to our prayer, O Lord,
and have mercy on all.

Suggested intercessions

- * for the church, that it may be a sign of forgiveness in the world
- * that Christians may not seek retaliation, but love their enemies
- * for peace and reconciliation between nations and among groups within our own country
- * for those divided by enmity and hatred, that by love and forgiveness broken relationships might be restored

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- * for families that are divided or alienated from one another

Concluding prayer

Heavenly Father, teach us to love and to forgive as we have been forgiven. Make us perfect, as you are perfect. Hear our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Call to prayer

Jesus says to his followers: 'You are light for the world. Let your light shine before others.' So let us bring to our heavenly Father the needs of all people.

Response

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Suggested intercessions

- * for the church, that we may obey your laws from the heart
- * that Christians may shine before others with your light
- * that people may recognise their need for your forgiveness, and turn to you and be saved
- * for all in government, that they may promote righteousness and peace
- * for all who harbour anger, and all who are victims of anger, that they may set free and know your peace
- * that married couples may be faithful to each other, and that all people may live pure and decent lives
- * for all in need, that they may trust in your fatherly care and know your love

Concluding prayer

Lord, when we cry for help, you listen to us. Hear our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Merciful Father,
you gave Jesus Christ to be for us the bread of life,
that those who come to him should never hunger.
Draw us to our Lord in faith and love,
that we may eat and drink with him at his table in the kingdom,
where he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

Almighty and merciful God,
you have taught us through your Son,
that to love is to fulfil the law.
As we have received his love in this sacrament,
help us to love you with our whole heart,
and our neighbours as ourselves.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Most loving Father,
you have shown how much you care for us
by feeding us with the body and blood
of your dear Son, Jesus Christ.
Keep us from faithless fears
and worldly anxieties,
that no cloud may hide from us
the light of your love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
For he lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

PRAYERS

Holy God of compassion, you invite us into your way of forgiveness and peace. Lead us to love our enemies, and transform our words and deeds to be like his through whom we pray, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

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Almighty and merciful God,
you have taught us through your Son
that to love is to fulfil the law.
Help us to love you with our whole heart,
and our neighbours as ourselves.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Loving heavenly Father,
thank you that your Son loved us
even when we were enemies,
and that he prayed for those who killed him.
Teach us to be merciful like you,
and do good to all people,
even to those who do us harm.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Perfect Light of revelation,
as you shone in the life of Jesus,
whose epiphany we celebrate,
so shine in us and through us,
that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

O God,
you spoke your word
and revealed your good news in Jesus, the Christ.
Fill all creation with that word again,
so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations
and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,
we may become one living body,
your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen.

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To God who welcomes all in love,
let us pray for the good of the church
and the concerns of those in need.
God of every land and nation,
you have created all people
and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.
Listen to the cries of those who pray to you,
and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name,
all people will know the power of love at work in the world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,
let us lift our hearts in faith
to the one who hears all prayers
and holds close all those in need.
Holy God, you gather the whole universe
into your radiant presence
and continually reveal your Son as our Saviour.
Bring healing to all wounds,
make whole all that is broken,
speak truth to all illusion,
and shed light in every darkness,
that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

O God most holy,
in Jesus Christ you have laid a foundation
upon which to build our lives.
Help us to follow your perfect law of love,
that we may fulfill it
and observe it to the end. Amen.

Lord, in your kindness
listen to the prayers of your people.
Have mercy on us
who are justly punished for our sins,
and save us,
for the glory of your name.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,

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one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Most loving Father,
it is your will
that we should leave all our worries with you.
Keep us from faithless fears
and worldly anxieties,
that no cloud may hide from us
the light of your love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
For he lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Thank you, Jesus our Saviour,
for keeping God's law perfectly for us.
Teach us through your Spirit
to follow you
and fulfil the law by a life of love.
For you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Perfect Light of revelation,
as you shone in the life of Jesus,
whose epiphany we celebrate,
so shine in us and through us,
that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

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Sisters and brothers,
let us lift our hearts in faith
to the one who hears all prayers
and holds close all those in need.
Holy God, you gather the whole universe
into your radiant presence
and continually reveal your Son as our Savior.
Bring healing to all wounds,
make whole all that is broken,
speak truth to all illusion,
and shed light in every darkness,
that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Lord of the hosts of heaven, our salvation and our strength, without you we are lost: guard us from all that harms or hurts and raise us when we fall; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God, give us reverence for all creation and respect for every person, that we may mirror your likeness in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God, you sent your Son to proclaim your kingdom and to teach with authority. Anoint us with the power of your Spirit, that we, too, may bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the broken hearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

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God of dawning light, hear our prayers today and give us the strength to put aside all cares and to chose to follow you in your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Christ the Son of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Divine Gardener,
you give growth to our seeds
and to the towering forest trees;
you raise to abundant life that which seems dead.
Teach us to choose blessing
and life rather than death,
so that we may walk blamelessly,
seeking you
through reconciliation with all of your children. Amen.

'Choose life, so that you and your descendants may live....' (Deuteronomy 30:19)

God, Creator,
for your glory shining forth in sky and sea,
in the changing light on the hills,
in the flight of birds,
in the plants of the field
for the gift of life in all its fullness,
we thank you.

Jesus, Redeemer,
for blessing children,
healing the sick,
raising up the lowly
suffering the brokenness of the world in your own body
that we might have fullness of life,
we thank you.

Holy Spirit, Comforter,
for breathing new hope and strength into our lives
breaking down barriers
drawing human beings together in love
resisting all that diminishes fullness of life,
we thank you.

Holy Trinity,
in all that we do and say and are,
may we always choose life,
for ourselves, and for our neighbours.
Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES **1**

DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20: In these words Moses, his life drawing to a close, refers to the people of Israel's crossing of the Jordan River in which he cannot join them. He wants his words to go with them and therefore warns them of the choices that will determine their wellbeing in the Promised Land. These will be life and prosperity if the people remain faithful and obedient to the Lord. On the other hand there will be death and adversity if they forget the Lord and stray into idol worship. He therefore urges them to remember the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their descendants will possess the land in order to bring blessing to the world. Their faithfulness will make them partners with God in fulfilling his promise.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-9: Both the creation and the fostering of faith are the work of God alone. The ministers of the congregation at Corinth had sown the word of God. However, the people had not grown and advanced beyond spiritual infancy the way they should have. They thought they were very knowledgeable because they valued and looked for human wisdom and critically drew off favourites according to their ministers' particular styles. Paul told them they were functioning according to their lower sinful natures. They needed to see themselves as God's field, God's building.

MATTHEW 5:21-37: While emphasising the importance of the law, the Lord moves beyond the mere external observance of commandments to the spirit of love which fulfils the law. When the Christian removes the wrongful thought (anger, dislike, hate) or feeling (lustful employment of the eye and the hand) from the inmost soul, the command of God then has free course in our willing and doing. Divorce similarly becomes a possibility when attitudes became lax. One's language needs oaths when absolute truth is only considered to be an option. When love for the Lord fills the heart, the law serves as an avenue of peaceful, pure and truthful loving relationships between people.

LECTIONARY NOTES **2**

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Not surprisingly, there is a clear development this week from last week's readings. The Old Testament passages, though, if looked at alone, can be misleading in the sense that they seem to indicate that obedience to God's law is a guarantee of health, wealth and happiness. This is, of course, much

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the way the world was believed to work back when these passages were written, but we know that it's a little more complex than this. It is this complexity that both Paul and Jesus try to engage in their teaching. For Paul it's about growing into a spiritual maturity that no longer needs competitive factions to feel secure and "righteous". Paul calls the Corinthians to recognise that all of God's servants are just that – people doing a job for God's reign. What is important is not aligning oneself with particular people, leaders or ideas, but following God's constant work of growth into becoming a true Christ-follower. For Christ, faithful and true spirituality is not about ticking off a few laws in a box of obedience, but is doing the work of the heart, of checking the real impact of who we are and how this works out in what we do and in our relationships. It is embracing the quest to reflect God's grace, God's goodness and God's integrity that is the heart of this week's call. Law is easy, and does not transform. Living with a God-formed integrity of heart, speech and action is what truly saves.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: There are two ways to apply the theme this week. The first is to reflect on Paul's ideas of factions, and Jesus' call to reflect on how we treat each other. It takes only a few seconds to identify the many ways we separate ourselves in the world – nations war against nations; political parties slander and undermine each other; religions seek to kill one another's followers; wealthy and poor seek to protect themselves from each other. The destruction brought about by this division is devastating. If we can begin to find our common humanity within, and begin to live, globally, from a Christ-like heart, we can begin to heal some of the damage we have done. The second is to focus the challenge on living our faith from the heart in a globally connected world. It is easy to do business in ways that are legal, but that nevertheless hurt poor farmers, factory workers or the environment. It is easy to lead nations or organisations in ways that are constitutionally and legally sanctioned, but that nevertheless serve only ourselves and leave others broken. It is easy to conduct ourselves as citizens of the world in ways that are lawful, but that bring great harm to people in other parts of the world – or even our own neighbourhood. Christ's challenge is to refuse to allow ourselves to live only according to the low standard of law, but to go beyond it to living from the heart – serving, seeking justice, offering welcome and compassion, protecting the vulnerable and preserving our rich ecological heritage on the planet. There is no question, though, that to adopt Christ's heart-driven life is going to be painful and difficult. It will also open the doors to life for us and others, though.

LOCAL APPLICATION: It is all too easy to build our lives and our churches on programs – easy sets of rules and laws that guide what we do, but that

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have little connection with our real, heart-felt, lives or what's going on in the world around us. It is easy to go to church on Sunday and sing songs and pray prayers. It is easy to not steal, not kill, not commit adultery. But, simply obeying these laws do not bring life to us or to those around us. It is when we allow God to capture our hearts with the truth of the Gospel, when we allow God to continually and disturbingly challenge and grow our hearts, when we live from the inside out, ensuring that our hearts are filled with Christ's love and are right with God and others, and allow that to guide our speech and actions – then we become those who make a healing, restoring impact on the world around us, and who both find, and bring to others, fullness of life. This living from the heart takes far more work, and far more awareness than legalism. It requires us to allow God to constantly challenge our attitudes and convictions, to constantly transform our feelings and reactions and to constantly call us to a higher standard. In this way of living we cannot rest in a future guarantee of heaven after we die. We are called to work to be citizens of heaven now, and to actively bring heaven into our world and our lives through submitting to God's gracious transforming guidance. But one thing is sure. If we are courageous enough to embark on the journey of heart-driven living, we will discover a richness and a fullness to life, a deeper connectedness and a more gracious way of relating and living together. In this sense the Old Testament writers are correct – following God's ways does guarantee life for us.

SERMON OUTLINE 1

Matthew 5:21-37 You have heard that it was said

Jesus continues to expound God's truth in the Sermon on the Mount on the shores of the Sea of Galilee... He focuses on difficult issues – for his hearers then & us too!

1. **Anger 21-24:** in relation to the 6th Commandment "*You shall not murder*" - a heinous crime against humanity – but Jesus goes to the thought behind the deed - & looks at 3 types of anger & the penalty for them...
 - a) *if you are angry with a brother – orge (ill-will) - you will be liable to the council – 7-member local council;*
 - b) *are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement – Sanhedrin – 71 member Supreme Council..*
 - c) *if you say, "You fool" - will be liable to the hell of fire.*

Instead of such destructive influences *first be reconciled to your brother or sister – love is the key!*

2. Accusations 25-26: should be settled before going to court – even *while you are on the way to court...*

3. Adultery 27-32: ref 7th Commandment - “*You shall not commit adultery.*” Laxity of moral standards & marital fidelity is addressed by Jesus – *anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; & whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

4. Affirmations 33-37: - importance of keeping *the vows you have made to the Lord* - common in Jesus' day – but Jesus declares simply *37Let your word be “Yes, Yes” or “No, No”...* Be honest & trustworthy in all you do – put your faith into practice in faithful daily Xian living.... *By Norman Porteus*

SERMON OUTLINE 2

It's about choice...

Jesus just finished the readings last week with saying that the believers' righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. The prophets in the Old Testament often urged the Jews to see the world through God's eyes and not ask God to see the world through theirs. They emphasised the fact that faith is about participation in the work of God in our world and making His will and rule known. For the Jews, this participation in the work of God is the ultimate fulfilment of the law. The law was given so that it would enable the building of a people whose life together reflects the nature of God and makes that life and community engaging and attractive to others. Having spoken about the Pharisees and the teachers of the law Jesus now goes on to reference some of their teaching, introducing it with the words, ‘You have heard it said...’. He speaks about murder, adultery, divorce, oaths and later about an eye for an eye and loving ones enemies.

In the small tight knit communities of the first century adultery, divorce and broken oaths could tear the community apart and bring rifts between families that would last for years and ultimately result in bitter feuds and deaths. Matthew was writing for a Jewish audience, who would be familiar with the teaching of the great Rabbi's of the time, the conservative teaching of Shamai which recognised sexual misconduct on the woman's part as the only reason for divorce, and the more progressive school of Hillel which allowed other reasons for separation. It may well be that Jesus was commenting on these various schools of thought and religious belief. But we need to read Jesus' comments on topics such as adultery, divorce and the keeping and breaking of promises and oaths not just in the context of the different schools of rabbinic teaching, but more importantly in the context of His earlier discourse on reconciliation. The focus for Jesus was on living out the lives God

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intended for us, as individuals and as a community of believers, united together through our faith and love for each other. It's not surprising then that Jesus speaks out against those things which could divide a community so bitterly and tear individual lives apart.

Implicit in the words of Christ are the words of Moses in Deuteronomy. At the time Deuteronomy is written Israel are camped in the plains of Moab and about to enter the Promised Land and Moses is coming to the end of his life. In his final appeal to Israel he tells how God is ready to forgive and restore all people, even those who have turned their back on Him. But he turns back to a message that he has already introduced to the Israelites earlier. There is a choice to be made; between life and death, between loving God and forsaking Him, between blessings or curses. As the Israelites stand on the brink of taking possession of the land they have been promised in scripture they have to choose between obedience to God's laws or going their own way. Not surprisingly Moses urges them to choose life. It was a choice they had to make. For Moses the focus was on the Israelites living out the life God intended for them as individuals and as a community of believers. That would involve decision and choice.

If we too are to live out the life God intended for us, as individuals and as a community, that too will involve choices and reconciliation. Choices to walk in God's ways as lived out by Jesus in the gospels, step by step, day by day. And reconciliation too, with those people and situations from which we have become divided in the past. Paul urges the Corinthians not to be divided by quarrels and power struggles but to work together to bring about God's Kingdom. To be fellow workers together in participating in the work of God in the world and making His will and rule known to all. A task which would constantly require them to make choices about how deeply they engaged with Him in His work and about who they would need to be reconciled with in order to avoid the petty but destructive divisions which could destroy the mission to which they were called and in which they chose and professed to be engaged. Sound familiar? *By Sam Cappleman*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

1 CORINTHIANS 1-9

The Text this Week. Articles. No sermon link

<http://www.textweek.com/pauline/1cor3a.htm>

Basic exegesis and sermon outline on different types of ministry

<http://www.lectionarystudies.com/epiphany6aae.html>

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A common hunger, a common hope, a common faith. Sermon a by United Methodist cleric on Verse 5. Good insights from: Dr William H Willimon on Holy Communion, the late Arthur Ashe, the tennis player to his daughter a few days before his death on spiritual nourishment, and from Eugene Peterson who states that 'the kitchen of the church' is essential to ministry and mission.

<http://www.eumcnh.org/images/sermon%20060307.pdf>

Baby Christians by Pastor David Legge

<http://www.preachtheword.com/sermon/1cor07.shtml>

Matthew 5:21-37

The Text this Week <http://www.textweek.com/mtlk/matt5c.htm>

A la carte Christianity. The Commandments are not a la carte. Sermons from Seattle

<http://www.textweek.com/mtlk/matt5c.htm>

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/year-sixth-sunday-after-epiphany-sixth.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

For the healing of the nations
In Christ there is no east or west
O for a heart to praise my God
Dear Lord and Father of mankind

[O For A Heart To Praise My God](#)

[Be Thou My Vision](#)

[Love Divine, All Loves Excelling](#)

[Jesus Calls Us! O'er The Tumult](#)

[Dear Jesus In Whose Life I See](#)

Let Me Shine: [Chord Chart](#); [Mp3 Preview](#) (*Scroll down for links in both cases*)

[What Can I Do](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Love Enough](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[With Kindness](#) (*Press the play button in the media player to hear the song*)

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In My Generation (I Want To Serve The Purpose) (*There's a video of someone singing this song unaccompanied on YouTube if you want to get a sense of how this song goes. Check it out [here](#)*)