

The Bride Valley Telephone Service for Sunday 25th September 2022

Trinity 15

Prepared for you by the Reverend Jane Williams and available on 01308 293062

Welcome in the name of Christ. God's grace, mercy and peace be with you: **and also with you**

Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the King of creation

1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation:
all ye who hear, now to his temple draw near,
joining in glad adoration.

2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
shieldeth thee gently from harm, or when fainting sustaineth:
hast thou not seen how thy heart's wishes have been
granted in what he ordaineth?

3 Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend thee:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
if to the end he befriend thee.

4 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen sound from his people again:
gladly for aye we adore him!

Joachim Neander (1650-1680) (Public Domain)

Opening Prayer

Lord God, our maker, you are the source of all our life and strength, the fountain of all that we know and the provider of all that we need; reach out to us in this act of worship, that it may be more than a formal exercise of religious tradition, but rather, a means of grace.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Enlarge our understanding to take in some of your greatness; and make our minds sensitive to such light and truth as we can bear. Move us by your Spirit to respond to the mystery of your presence, be our daily companion on the journey of life – for you know the way we should go and only your purposes are of lasting worth.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Forgive us when we seek after lesser things and turn away from you and from our neighbours, make us more aware of the needs of others and of your glory in the world around us. Disturb us with inner restlessness which will never be satisfied until we become what you have made us to be.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Lord, hear our prayers and help us not only to speak but to listen, and not only to listen, but to obey, and not only to obey, but to love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

From The Electric Bible by Peter Dainty

The Collect

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 your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading: Amos 6:1a,4-7

Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria, the notables of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel resorts! Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

New Testament Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

Gospel Reading: Luke 16.19-end

The Rich Man and Lazarus

‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.” But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received

your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house— for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."'

Reflection

There was once a very rich man who was visited by a rabbi. The rabbi wanted to know if he would make a donation to the poor, but the rich man refused. So, the rabbi asked him to look in a mirror and tell him what he saw. 'Myself, of course,' he replied. Then the rabbi asked him to go to the window and look down to the road below and describe what he saw. Mystified the man walked across and looked down and described the different people he could see going about their daily lives. But why did the rabbi want to know, because they were doing the things they always did. 'Exactly,' replied the rabbi, 'if you look through a window you see life, if you look in a mirror you just see yourself. But a mirror is simply a piece of glass backed with a piece of silver. That piece of silver hides from view anything but yourself. In the same way the silver and riches that you own have hidden from you everything else. You do not see the plight of the poor and the vulnerable, or even God.'

We all use different excuses to avoid looking and seeing the real plight of the vulnerable. 'They will just use our money for drink and drugs.' 'They want to be homeless.' And the rich man in Jesus' parable was just the same. He didn't even notice the poor man lying starving at his gate each day, desperate to just eat some crumbs from the rich man's table. He chose not to see him.

RETELL THE PARABLE

But God saw him. God even knew the poor man's name, Lazarus. He had called him by name. He was precious in God's sight. Suddenly there seems to be a role reversal as both men die. Lazarus goes to heaven. The rich man to Hades. This isn't what should happen. Rich men are rich because God has blessed them greatly. The rich man was able to look up from his place of torment to see Lazarus. He even made an effort to remember the poor man's name. 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me. Send Lazarus to look after me, and aid me in these scorching flames, I am in agony.' He might have remembered to use Lazarus name, but his attitude had not changed. He cannot see beyond himself and his own needs. He was still better than the poor man. Lazarus still only deserved to be his slave.

But Abraham looks down upon the rich man, even now not using his name. 'Son' he shouts down, 'you have already had so many good things, whilst Lazarus has suffered. There is too big a chasm between us for Lazarus to come and help you now.'

In desperation the rich man tries a different tack: 'Send Lazarus to my brothers to warn them so they won't end up being tormented here too.' But Abraham is adamant that if the brothers haven't listened to the prophets, they won't listen to someone who has risen from the dead.

DEEPER MEANING

Suddenly the whole meaning behind the parable changes. It isn't about being rich and poor after all, although how the rich treat the poor is obviously important. It is about something much deeper. Would the Pharisees listen to Moses and the prophets and hear what they were really saying? Not their own interpretation of the Law, an interpretation that created a stumbling block to so many, but to hear God's message through it of love and compassion. Would they be like the older brother

in the story of the Prodigal Son when the father tells him that his brother was dead but is now alive, but he doesn't want to know. He can only see his own self-righteousness and importance. Or would they be willing to stop and to listen? When Jesus rose from the dead would it make a difference? Would they realise that they were treating Jesus, just as the rich man treated Lazarus? Would they let their hearts be changed and renewed by returning to God? Would they be willing to be part of God's topsy turvy kingdom where the poor and the vulnerable are lifted high? Where even the unlovely become the beloved? And what about us? Are we willing to peel away the silver on the back of the mirror and see the places in our community where God wants us to be?

Prayer of Humble Access

Lord, we come to this your table trusting in your love alone, hoping in your mercy, for we have no goodness of our own. Yet you do not give us only crumbs, which from your table fall; you provide that bread and wine, which is the richest food of all. Broken bread and broken body, poured out wine and blood you give, we in you and you in us Lord, by this grace forever live. Though we cannot receive you sacramentally at this time we receive from you spiritually in the nourishment of us you freely give. **Amen**

And now we join our prayers together in the words of 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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Final Prayer

God of compassion, through your Son Jesus Christ you have reconciled your people to yourself. As we follow his example, may we obey you with willing hearts and serve one another in holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Final Hymn: Be thou my vision

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong
tower:

O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

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Sources: New Patterns for Worship copyright @ The Archbishop's Council 2002, second edition 2008 and The Electric Bible by Peter Dainty and Rebecca Sparey Taylor