

The ultimate goal is the “glory of God the Father”, the reclamation of God’s sovereignty, his power over, and presence in, the universe. So (v. 12) may they, using Christ’s example of obedience and lowliness (“fear and trembling”), continue to “work out” their “salvation” with God’s help in what they intend (“will”, v. 13) and what they do (“work”).

Matthew 21:23-32

In the final week of his earthly life, Jesus has just shown the importance of faith in understanding God’s ways. Now, as he teaches in the Temple, representatives of the Sanhedrin (“chief priests and the elders”) ask who has given him the power and “authority” to do all that he has done in his ministry. But he will only answer them if they first answer his question (v. 25), one which will show whether they have the requisite faith to understand his answer. His questioners are skilled in the Law, but it is of little help in deciding whether a prophet (in this case John the Baptist) is genuinely from God. If they say that John was from God, they should have repented as he urged; if they say he was not, they will lose face and status with the many who have come to Jesus (v. 26). The Sanhedrin judged such issues, so their answer (v. 27) shows their incompetence. Jesus tells them a parable about admission to the kingdom (vv. 28-30). People known for their evil ways (“tax collectors ...”, v. 31) have turned to God (like the first son), while the authorities, (like the second son), have observed the rules (note “sir”, v. 30) but have not acted on them. But they can still come to faith; even if they do, people considered to be disreputable will enter the Kingdom “ahead of you” (v. 31). © 1996-2020 Chris Haslam

~ Notices ~

Prayers - Prayers are said daily for the welfare of our community, our nation and the world. If you have any particular issue that you would like to be prayed for, do please email me on frkevinobrien@me.com or call me on 065 672 4721.

Online services - These continue each Sunday, in addition to the weekly meditations on Facebook.

Website - Our website <https://clareanglicans.ie> has significantly developed, so please do scroll down the opening page to explore the new sections and information.

- Worship - a number of videos of services
- Pray - leaflets and resources on ways of praying
- Explore - videos of some inspiring speakers
- Think Question Believe - a parish podcast
- Viewpoint - videos on the basics of Christianity
- Rector’s Blog - articles, thoughts, opinions

Rector: Email: frkevinobrien@me.com Tel: 065 672 4721

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16th Sunday after Trinity (Year A)

Collect

Lord of creation, whose glory is around and within us: open our eyes to your wonders, that we may serve you with reverence and know your peace at our lives’ end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Suggested Hymns - *For the online service you might like to view these hymns with lyrics on YouTube.*

- 1) O Jesus I have promised
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UU_cev2ri90&t=54s
- 2) All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WVSYGGBfi8>
- 3) Lead me lord in thy righteousness - choir anthem
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlwxEKdIQw>
- 4) Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ji4y9Q-K0>

Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32

The word of the Lord came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die. Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is unfair.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is unfair.’ O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin.* Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

Psalms 25

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
O my God, in you I trust; ♦
let me not be put to shame;
let not my enemies triumph over me.
Let none who look to you be put to shame, ♦
but let the treacherous be shamed and frustrated.
Make me to know your ways, O Lord, ♦
and teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me, ♦
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you have I hoped all the day long.
Remember, Lord, your compassion and love, ♦
for they are from everlasting.
Remember not the sins of my youth
or my transgressions, ♦
but think on me in your goodness, O Lord,
according to your steadfast love.

Gracious and upright is the Lord; ♦
 therefore shall he teach sinners in the way.
 He will guide the humble in doing right ♦
 and teach his way to the lowly.

Philippians 2: 1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God
 as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave,
 being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
 he humbled himself
 and became obedient to the point of death—
 even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
 and gave him the name
 that is above every name,
 so that at the name of Jesus
 every knee should bend,
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 and every tongue should confess
 that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Matthew 21: 23-32

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. The father* went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a prophet and a priest. His ministry began before the conquest of Judah in 587 BC, and continued in exile in Babylon. This book is the foundation for both Jewish and Christian visionary or apocalyptic literature, e.g. Revelation (or The Apocalypse.) It is a book that contains many strange things (strange because we do not understand them, e.g. Ezekiel eating a scroll), but the prophet's message to the exiles is clear: he assures his hearers of God's abiding presence among them, and he emphasizes God's involvement in the events of the day, so that Israel and all nations "will know that I am the Lord". For the first time, we see the importance of the individual in his relationship to God. To a dispersed and discouraged people, he brings a message of hope: hope that God will restore them to their homeland and the temple.

Psalm 25:1-10

The psalmist seeks deliverance from personal enemies. He trusts in God (vv. 1-4); may God never allow the ungodly (the "treacherous", v. 3) to claim victory over him. Key to maintaining the upper hand is knowing God's ways, being taught by God (v. 4), accepting God's leadership (v. 5), coming to know ultimate "truth" (v. 5): this is the way to being saved from the scheming of his (and God's) adversaries. The psalmist nudges God into remembering his "mercy" (v. 6, compassion) and "love", qualities of God since time immemorial. In youthful flings, we deviate from God's ways, but please, Lord, remember my times of fidelity (v. 7). God does teach his ways to those who have strayed and who approach him in awe ("humble", v. 9). "Love and faithfulness" (v. 10) are characteristic of God's covenant relationship with his people.

Philippians 2:1-13

There is of course "encouragement in Christ", so Paul urges the Christians at Philippi: through it, and moved by God's love for them, may they to "be of the same mind[set], having the same love, being in full accord ..." (v. 2). May they "regard others as better than ... [themselves]" (v. 3), freely adopting a lowly, unassertive stance before others, replacing self-interest with concern for others. Vv. 5-11 are an early Christian hymn to which Paul has added v. 8b. He exhorts his readers to be of the same mindset as Jesus – one that is appropriate for them, given their existence "in Christ" (v. 5). Christ was "in the form of God" (v. 6): he was already like God; he had a God-like way of being, e.g. he was not subject to death. He shared in God's very nature. Even so, he did not "regard" being like God "as something to be exploited", i.e. to be used for his own purposes. Rather, he "emptied himself" (v. 7), made himself powerless and ineffective – as a slave is powerless, without rights. He took on the likeness of a human being, with all which that entails (except sin), including death. As a man, he lowered ("humbled", v. 8) himself, and throughout his life in the world, was fully human and totally obedient to God, even to dying. (Paul now adds: even to the most debasing way of dying, crucifixion – reserved for slaves and the worst criminals.) God actively responded to this total denial of self, his complete living and dying for others, by placing him above all other godly people ("highly exalted him", v. 9), and bestowing on him the name, title and authority of "Lord" (v. 11) over the whole universe ("heaven", v. 10, "earth", "under the earth"). This authority, before Christ came to us, the Father reserved for himself. Paul recalls God's words spoken through Isaiah: "From every corner of the earth [all are to] turn to me and be saved; for I am God ... to me every knee shall bow ... to me every tongue shall swear, saying 'In the Lord alone are victory and might ... all Israel's descendants will be victorious and will glory in the Lord'"; the Philippians shall worship him; confessing that "Jesus Christ is Lord" (v. 11) is proclaiming the victory and might of God.