

Ardoch Parish Church

Sunday 20th September 2020

Rev Mairi Perkins welcomes everyone to our Service of Worship. Today's parable is set in the vineyard and Mairi's reflection is on "so the last will be first and the first will be last."



Our first hymn is "As the deer pants for the water"

As the deer pants for the water
So my soul longs after you
You alone are my hearts desire
And I long to worship you

Ch: you alone are my strength, my shield
To you alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my hearts desire
And I long to worship you

I want you more than gold or silver
Only you can satisfy
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye

You are my friend and you are my brother
Even though you are king
I love you more than any other
So much more than anything.

Mairi leads us in prayer

Let us pray

Generous God,
thank you for loving us
and for eternally being willing to forgive us
and let us rebuild a relationship with you.
Lord Jesus, you showed us
by your life how we can let go of hate
and choose to love
and reconcile with our enemies.
As we look at our broken world
we see so many people
who have inherited
centuries of hate and violence
and can see no way out
except through a continuation of
hate and violence.
We thank you for the people
engaging in the hard work
of peace and reconciliation
a work that needs everyone
to sit at the table and be open to each other.
We pray for the people

whose lives have been destroyed
by hate and violence
who continue to live in fear and anxiety
and see no way to peace and safety.
We thank you for the people
using their gifts to enable people
to find safe places to live
and work to feed their families.
We pray for the people
whose lives have been impacted
in so many different ways
by the pandemic of Covid-19;
for the radical changes
that have forced them to adapt and cope
with this new way of living.
We thank you for the people who have led
and advised us through these strange days,
for all who have worked hard to help us
find a way forward and who have put aside
any differences they may have had
and chosen to work together with others
who can bring the changes we need.
Lord, may we be willing to make the changes we
need
and to let go of our fears and mistrust of others,
so that together we can all move forward
and find a way of peace and reconciliation
that works for everyone,
whoever and wherever they are.
Amen. (Spill the Beans)

Let us say together the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy
name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

**Bob Aitken reads from
Matthew Chapter 20 v 1—16**

The hymn which Bob has chosen is “Will your anchor hold in the storms of life” as he thought the words were appropriate for the times we are going through.

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

Refrain:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rage, and the wild winds blow,
shall the angry waves then your bark o'erflow?

[Refrain]

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,
when the waters cold chill your latest breath?
On the rising tide you can never fail,
while your anchor holds within the veil. [Refrain]

Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?

Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past for evermore? [Refrain]

Source: Hymns of Glory, Songs of Praise #737

Mairi leads us in her reflection on “so the last will be first, and the first will be last”

We have been carefully taught and we teach our children from a very early age that fairness matters. How often have we observed a group of children playing and it's not long before you hear someone say, “That's not fair”

It's not just children. Adults want fairness too, but do we have a different understanding of what fairness is and might look like, than God does. If we are using fairness to measure how we should act and how we might judge and treat others then we may very well be falling way below what God expects from us. God on the other hand uses love, acceptance, mercy, forgiveness, or generosity as the measure by which we should act and judge another person or life circumstances.

We like fairness though don't we, because it give us some assurance of order, predictability, control, and hierarchy; even if it is a false assurance. We could all tell our own story of the workers in the vineyard because a lot of us have possibly been there and felt that unfairness because we think that fairness is based on what we deserve, how hard we work,

what we achieve and the way we behave. We live in and promote a wage based society in which you earn what you get, fair or not.

Is it fair that the footballer is paid more than the neurosurgeon, is it fair that someone loses their job whilst someone else is furloughed, what was fair about the conditions Mother Teresa worked under. What happens then when divine goodness trumps human fairness?

Well..... You get today's parable.

Today's parable spells it out very clearly wages and grace stand in opposition to each other. They are two opposing world views.

Now that we bring Grace into the picture everything is turned onto its head

Grace is exciting, it's dangerous. It throws business as usual into the air.

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last." The world on the other hand says the last are last and the first are first because they deserve it. It's what is fair. But this kind of fairness does not have priority in the kingdom of heaven where grace is the rule not the exception.

Grace looks beyond our productivity, our appearance, our dress, our race or ethnicity, our accomplishments, our failures.

Grace reveals the goodness of God. Wages reveal human effort.

Grace seeks unity and inclusion.

Wages make distinctions and separate.

Grace just happens.

Wages are based on merit.

The only precondition of grace is that we show up and open ourselves to receive what God is giving. When we do, we begin to see our lives, the world, our neighbour differently.

The tragedy of a wage based life is that it blinds us to the presence of grace, the life of God, in our own life. It can make us resentful of grace, goodness, and beauty in the life of another. It separates and isolates us from others. Eventually we set up standards and expectations not only for ourselves and others but for God.

Why settle for the usual daily wage when God wants to give you “whatever is right” for your life, your needs, your salvation? “Whatever is right” will always be more than fair, more than we could ask or imagine. Yet we sometimes trust a wage based life more than we trust grace. In so doing we deny ourselves and others the life God wants to give. So what we need to think about is how might we begin to move from a wage based life to the vineyard of grace?

I offer you just a handful of simple suggestions to ponder on during next week.

If you stop comparing yourself and your life to others you will create room for grace to emerge.

Start really trusting that in God’s world there is enough for everyone.

Let go of any expectations that you may have based on what you think you or others deserve.

Give back to God the freedom to pay whatever is right knowing and accepting that God’s ways are not your ways.

Simply make no judgments of yourself or others.

That is the way of grace,

That is the way of God.

Amen

Our closing hymn is "Give thanks with a grateful heart"

Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks to the Holy One

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks to the Holy One

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

And now let the weak say, "I am strong."

Let the poor say, "I am rich

Because of what the Lord has done for us"

And now let the weak say, "I am strong."

Let the poor say, "I am rich

Because of what the Lord has done for us"

Give thanks with a grateful heart (to the grateful heart)

Give thanks to the Holy One (to the Holy One)

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

Give thanks with a grateful heart (to the grateful heart)

Give thanks to the Holy One (to the Holy One)

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

And now let the weak say, "I am strong."

Let the poor say, "I am rich

Because of what the Lord has done for us"

And now let the weak say, "I am strong."
Let the poor say, "I am rich (I am rich)
Because of what the Lord has done for us"
Give thanks

Benediction

Now go, knowing you are loved by God. In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intimations

Autumn Link - Gordon Roy has kindly offered to edit and produce the Autumn Link.

30th September is the deadline for submitting articles, reports etc

Please send all material directly to Gordon at,
gordon.roy@outlook.com

The Ardoch Session Meeting is to be held Wednesday 23rd September at 7pm

The Zoom link will be issued nearer that date.

Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139

ardochparishchurch.org

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