



Heacham Parish Church

20th September 2020 Sunday Service Online

Peter plays Menuet by Eric Thiman as we gather

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you **and also with you**

As we gather in our homes, together yet apart, we meet in the presence of God

God, you have called us to come together;
you have called us to turn from our sin;
you have called us to worship you.
In your name we gather together yet apart ;
to your name we offer our praise.

Amen.

Prayers of confession:

For the times when we have not lived in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, dear Lord: **forgive us.**

For the times when we have not stood firm to your kingdom values, dear Lord: **forgive us.**

For the times when we have not united in the Spirit, dear Lord: **forgive us.**

For the times we have heard your call but turned away from you, dear Lord: **forgive us.**

For the times we have not celebrated your goodness and love, dear Lord: **forgive us.**

We are sorry that we do not always listen,
do not always hear, do not always obey;

and we ask for discernment,
courage and strength to be faithful to you.

Amen.

Song: I will offer up my life played and sung by Terry, Karen, Hilary
and Lesley.

I will offer up my life
In spirit and truth,
Pouring out the oil of love
As my worship to You.
In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
Of a broken heart.

Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of Your name
For the things You have done?
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part,
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart.

You deserve my every breath
For You've paid the great cost;
Giving up Your life to death,
Even death on a cross.
You took all my shame away,
There defeated my sin,
Opened up the gates of heaven,
And have beckoned me in.

Bible Reading: Matthew 20: 1-6 read by Margaret Hyde

A Reflection from Bishop of Norwich, Rt Revd Graham Usher (who
spent the afternoon on Thursday in this deanery)

Matthew 20.1-16

Thank you for this opportunity to talk to people gathered for worship across Heacham and Rising. It was good to spend time in the deanery, meeting the licensed clergy and visiting a whole range of different projects and people. Thank you for all that you have been doing to serve your communities in recent months.

We seem to have been thinking a lot about numbers over the last few weeks. How can we mark a special occasion in a group of 6? Who are the 30 to invite to a wedding? Are the daily numbers of infections of Covid increasing? And then there was the power of numbers behind an algorithm, and the power of the number of students demanding a u-turn on their grades.

Sometimes the maths just does not add up and that seems to have been at the heart of today's Gospel parable. Jesus makes a habit of telling stories, parables, using images, metaphors and narratives from the everyday lives of his disciples to open their and our lives to the kingdom of heaven all around us.

And they are never predictable. All of these stories are ticking bombs, little packages of divine dynamite waiting to explode into our lives and reorient our understanding of who God is and how God's upside down kingdom works.

The kingdom of heaven is like a shepherd who abandons 99 sheep to search and recover one that is lost, like a merchant who sells all her goods to buy one pearl, like a farmer who sells all his land to buy one field, like a gardener who wastes much of his seed on rocky soil. Call it what you like, bad economics, poor farming, sloppy business. The kingdom of heaven is predictably unpredictable.

Today's story is about a landowner who goes out to the marketplace early in the morning to hire workers for the vineyard. I saw this in action when I was bishop of Dudley – at various places men would wait to be hired in the black economy – mostly Romanians – getting into the back of white vans. And if they needed more labour the white vans would come back a bit later. Indeed, in this parable after a couple hours the landowner goes back out and hires more. Then again at noon more are

hired, and in the middle of the afternoon still more, and then as the sun begins to set even those who respond with one of the most painful lines in all of scripture, "Because no one has hired us."

The text doesn't tell us why they weren't hired. Perhaps they didn't have the skills for work. Maybe they didn't speak the language, didn't have an education, or were illegal immigrants. Maybe they couldn't afford a bus fare that morning and had to walk, arriving late, or had to look after a sick child or do home education that morning. Perhaps there simply weren't enough jobs to go around. Whatever the reason, here they are, unemployed, left out, forgotten. Thus the landowner says to the un-hired workers, "You also go into the vineyard."

When pay-time in the vineyard comes, the landowner puts them in a queue. The ones who had only been working an hour haven't even loosened up their muscles or muddied their hands. While the ones hired at dawn are dripping with the grime and sweat of a hard 12-hour shift. The landowner starts dishing out the pay, starting with the last ones to be hired. When the exhausted first-comers see that the late-comers received a full day's pay for an hour's work, their backs straighten, eyes get wide.

If this generous landowner paid those slackers a day's wages for just an hour's work, surely their back-breaking effort would be justly rewarded. When they arrive at the front of the queue and receive the same wage, their exhaustion turns to anger, "What kind of business owner are you? Don't you know the basics of incentive and reward?! We're the ones with the sunburn, the blisters, and aching muscles. Not only do you pay us last but pay us the same! We deserve better!"

Goodness, this isn't the workplace as we know it. Might it suggest though that in the economy of God's kingdom there is something even better than profit margin, even greater than incentive and reward, even more beautiful than a well-oiled business . . . and that is grace?

The story is about God's generosity, about the lavish grace of a God who wants everyone included in the vineyard, who won't stop rushing out into the marketplace until all have been rounded up, all have been included in the work of the vineyard, even if it takes all day.

And then we discover God goes even further. In the economy of God's grace it is the same people who are hired at day's end who are first to receive God's generosity. In the kingdom of God the last become first in line. The outsiders become the insiders. The poor, forgotten, and left out, those hired last, are the ones closest to God's heart.

As this country staggers on through the horrors of coronavirus we will see more hardship, especially for those on the margins those excluded and without a voice.

The Hunstanton foodbank which I visited is already seeing an uptake in food parcel requests and are predicting a surge as the furlough scheme ends and more people become jobless.

The Baby Basics group, supporting new mums living in poverty, have already supported far more new parents than ever before.

I was learning at Snettisham Park Farm that the harvest of malted barley is simply not selling due to the collapse in the pub beer trade, added to the challenges for tourism this year.

How, I wonder, can we as a church breath God's grace yet more during these difficult days – seeking to be as generous as we can be?

Because to the forgotten workers in the marketplace, to all who for whatever reason have been left out, Jesus stretches his arms wide and welcomes them. In fact, centuries later Hildegard of Bingen, who's feast day we marked during my deanery visit, put it this way, "God hugs us. You are encircled by the arms of the mystery of God." My prayer is that we will know that grace and live reflecting it to others, to God's praise and glory.

Song: In Christ alone played by David and Kath

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!

My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Prayers of intercession led by Terry and Judith Clay

Heavenly father, your world is troubled and anxious over the concerns of
the corona virus, your word tells us in Philipians

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”

Lord we do so now, we thank you for all you have done in our lives, sustaining us through troubled times.

Your word also tells us,

“Do not worry” but Lord many of us do worry, help us now to relax our worries and trust in your unfailing love that you have for each one of us.

We pray for those working tirelessly to find a vaccine to fight the Covid 19 virus, give them strength and encouragement to sustain their efforts and for those working in our hospitals, care homes, in the test centres and the laboratories, keep them all safe and surround them with love.

This we pray in your precious name, **Amen.**

Heavenly Father, you treat us all equally no matter where we stand in the que, teach us how we can also show to one another that we have no favourites, help us to share our time without favour and not to feel that, if we are not first in line, we'll be forgotten. Lord, you forget no one, may we never forget you love us all equally.

This we pray in your precious name, **Amen.**

Lord, we pray for Veronica and all our ministry team, we thank you for the committed dedication they are giving us during these difficult times, upholding your Church congregation, for the online services, that they will continue to reach out to our village and beyond, serving as a witness to our love for you, Lord we thank you and give you the praise and the glory due your name.

This we pray in your precious name, **Amen.**

Lord, we pray for all those who are facing various illnesses. Give them the hope and courage they need. Comfort their pain, calm their fears and surround them with your peace.

Lord, when our hopes are shattered and people disappoint us, help us to remember that You will love us always. You will transform our troubles, we do not know how but we know You will. Help us to trust You.

Help us to live out the values You have given us. We all value honesty, integrity and forgiveness but when we are pressed do we really live them out, especially when it costs us. Strengthen us Lord to live out Your teaching. **Amen**

We pray together the Lord's Prayer lead by Gloria

Final Prayer

Lord, send us to work in your vineyard.
May we be willing,
may we be contented,
and may we be productive for you.

Amen.

Blessing

Go, and know that the Lord goes with you: let him lead you each day into the quiet place of your heart, where he will speak with you; know that he loves you and watches over you- that he listens to you in gentle understanding, that he is with you always, wherever you are and however you feel: and the blessing of God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit- be yours for ever.

Amen.

Peter plays Festive Scherzo by Malcolm Archer as we finish

Church Open for private prayer

Saturday afternoons 2-4pm and Wed 10-12noon.

Please use this time for quiet reflective prayer. Thank you to our welcomers who allow this to take place.

HEACHAM PARISH CHURCH online service will be on YouTube from 8am on Sunday am

Watch out for the email link.

Morning Prayer continues via Zoom Monday-Friday. Contact Penny Taylor for the link heacham.church@gmail.com.

The Prayer Course- Peter Greig- Via Zoom

John Whitbread and Gordon Taylor's homegroup are starting this course (8 weeks) via zoom. We begin this Thursday 24th September at 7.00pm but would be happy to run the course in the day for anyone who would find this easier. Please contact John 579326 or Gordon

gordonsmithtaylor50@gmail.com if you are interested and for a link to Zoom. www.prayercourse.org

Podcast: 'Sunday Hope'

The Diocese of Norwich has a weekly audio podcast called 'Sunday Hope'.



It is available on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [Overcast](#), and more.

The podcast can also be listened to from any landline telephone: call **01603 537577** (local rate) to hear the latest edition.

Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

