

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : September 20th, 2020
“Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity”

TRINITY 15 - 20 SEPTEMBER 2020

A genuine word for word quote: “I’ve been a faithful Christian all my life. To be honest, I get a bit mad when people suddenly reckon they’ve become a Christian, often when they’re getting on in years. Is it some kind of insurance policy they think they’re taking out? It really makes me cross; isn’t it quite unfair?” Well this was something of the diatribe I endured I had a couple of months ago – with a person from another church, I hasten to assure you. It was just really an adult version of the child’s cry of “It’s not fair”.

We know all too well that God does not only love and care for those we think he ought to. We know he doesn’t label some deserving and others decidedly not – as did the author of my recent conversation. God is for all and we have no right to be envious at the generosity and mercy God shows to others. For most of us are aware that, in different ways, God has been generous to us – and he wants to extend that generosity to everyone else. It is never too late for someone to realise God loves them – which is why a hospital chaplain can be a crucial member of the team at the bed of a dying patient – for it is never too late for God to extend his generosity. So it is that through his teaching, Jesus of Nazareth tries to help his hearers grasp what is the true nature of God’s loving, which is so much wider and broader than we can humanly understand.

Today’s Gospel parable of the hired workmen is a case in point. Here it is the labourers who complain “it’s not fair”. The first lot are happy to agree a day’s wage,

but they cannot cope with the employer being generous to those who only started work near the end of the day. Naturally, it is not those paid first who complain, but those who see the arrangement as a raw deal for themselves and resent it. So, yes, if our basis for reckoning in life is simply what we're worth on an hourly rate, then the longest working labourers probably have a good point.

But the owner is looking at it quite differently. He sees the whole needs of all the men in the market place, just as God sees all people with their needs and is concerned to provide for all. Whenever we see God's generosity in evidence, even when we may not think the receiver to be suitable, we have no right to question, judge or quibble. God doesn't split us up into some who are OK to be saved and some who aren't worth bothering with. Instead we should all celebrate at the amazing and forgiving love of God for everyone. The kingdom of God is not about being fair, nor about rewarding those who have been faithful for longer than others for God rejoices equally in all who come to him, and we are called to do the same.

Leaving such complex matters up to God to sort out can be difficult for some to do. Yet it is a challenge we are all called to take on board as we "stand firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the Gospel". Amen.