



Chet Valley Churches
Last Sunday Praise
27 September 2020



Welcome

Welcome to Last Sunday Praise. In this file you will find links to the songs we have chosen for our worship. Click on the links to take you to each song.

While we are now able to meet in church for worship, we are not allowed to sing – so for the time being Last Sunday Praise will remain in this format.

Introduction

Our theme for this service is 'God's Rewards'. We often think about God's love and his mercy, and we sometimes focus on his justice. In this service we're looking at the fairness of God's rewards. So let's take some time to praise and worship God, starting with a hymn that will almost certainly be familiar to you.

♪♪ All the songs link to YouTube. Just click with your mouse on the link, which will take you to a song with on-screen words. You may have to skip a few YouTube adverts if we have chosen songs that are not currently on the Chet Valley Churches YouTube channel.

♪♪ **Hear the call of the Kingdom**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

♪♪ **Faithful One**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqK-UnsRTFl>

♪♪ **All Heaven declares**

<https://youtu.be/bLAOYZHuV6U>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

We have been working our way through the season of harvest, with services to thank God for his faithfulness. We have a chance to acknowledge that while we have the science to understand why plants grow and why crops might (or might not) succeed, it is God who provides both the crops and the science. We sing 'All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord' – we might also include the earth and its ability to provide sustenance and beauty. But we should not forget that while there are enough resources for the whole world, they need to be shared more fairly so that others may live.

The prayer for today (the Collect) is the one for harvest.

Perhaps you might read the prayer aloud, line by line, stopping to think about each line as you do so.

The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

A Collect for Harvest:

Creator God,
you made the goodness of the land,
the riches of the sea
and the rhythm of the seasons;
as we thank you for the harvest,
may we cherish and respect
this planet and its peoples,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

♪♪ Build your kingdom here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijtSXbFLxD8>

♪♪ **All I have and all I am is yours**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3P9H8ERw9w>

♪♪ **Lord I lift your Name on high**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSK1JvGlc2E>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

We praise God for all that he is, and all that he has done for us through Jesus. But while Jesus's death and resurrection is a complete and finished task, our own task is ongoing. God offers us the chance to continue to learn, to deepen our faith and to grow closer to him. There is always something new to discover about our amazing God!

Perhaps you might like to ponder the following prayer.

A prayer for this time

Heavenly Father,

Forgive us for the times when we lose ourselves in our yesterdays so that we can not cope with our today;

forgive us for thinking so much about the old that we can not see the new work you are continually doing in our midst;

forgive us for living on our memories of yesterday rather than on our hopes for tomorrow.

♪♪ **My Jesus, my Saviour**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dr78ff70XKQ>

🎵 All I once held dear

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpPla-BskY>

Bible Reading

Matthew 20 verses 1-16

The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius^[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘These who were

hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

¹³ "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?' ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

¹⁶ "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Talk

Jen Hayden has written this reflection.

A few years ago, our children were invited to care for our friends' plants for a week or so while they were away. In exchange for a bit of cash for their troubles they were to be paid a small sum of money for each time they attended. This seemed absolutely fair enough to me as those who did more work would be rewarded the most. However very soon some grumblings started to occur: 'It's not fair. I can't go every day because I have Guide camp, but that's not my fault!' or 'I've been asked to go for a sleepover, but that means I'll get less money. It's not fair!'

I've come to the conclusion that there's simply no pleasing some people! Nowadays 3 of the children do paper rounds, and receive a flat rate of £25 per week irrespective of the number of papers they deliver or how long their rounds take, all Christmas and Easter tips are shared equally and they are expected to cover for each other's absence without moaning and for no extra recompense. This has led to objections because: 'I deliver

double the papers than she does' or 'My round takes twice as long as his' or 'I've covered her round twice, but she hasn't needed to cover mine yet!' and I have to admit to having some sympathy with these qualms.

It would appear that our children don't consider either approach to be a fair system of remuneration then. I'd be interested to learn Jesus' views on the matter. What would he do? Reward the worker depending on the time they spend working or administer a flat wage regardless?

Jesus addresses this conundrum in the Parable of the workers (Matthew 20:1-16), in response to Peter's question in Matthew 19:27: "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Peter wanted to know what reward would be given to those who give up everything to follow Jesus. In response, Jesus explains this truth about the kingdom of heaven.

Planting, maintaining and harvesting vineyards in first-century Israel was strenuous work requiring hard physical labour in the heat of summer. Often, additional labourers were required to get all the work done. The owner of this particular vineyard went to the marketplace at the first hour of the morning (6:00 a.m.) to find workers for the day. His offered wage of one denarius, a Roman's soldier's pay for a day, was generous indeed. The workers in the first group were more than happy to work for the generous wage.

As the day progressed and more workers were hired, the specific wage was not mentioned, but the landowner promised to pay "whatever is right." Apparently, the workers were sufficiently confident of the landowner's character that they trusted him at his word. Altogether, four groups of workers

were hired, the last group just one hour before the end of the day. When the time came for the wages to be paid, the first group of workers saw the last group being paid a denarius and were naturally thinking they would be paid more since they had worked the longest. Their anger against the landowner spilled forth when they saw they would all be paid the same, even though they got exactly what they had agreed upon when they were hired. The landowner was forced to defend his actions to the first group, even though he had dealt with them in perfect fairness according to the contract.

The landowner, whose decision to pay all the workers the same was an act of mercy—not injustice—and represents God, whose grace and mercy are shed abundantly upon those of His choosing. “For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy” (Romans 9:15-16). In the matter of salvation, His grace and mercy are given to those whose self-righteous works could never obtain it. We are all sinful and “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), but His grace is sufficient to redeem all who believe. Whether God calls someone early or late in life to partake of His grace, the glory and praise for our salvation is His and His alone and in no way amounts to unfairness.

Just as the landowner has a right to do what he wishes with his own money, so does God have the right to have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

The first group of workers in the vineyard resented receiving the same wage as the last group. Their attitude was similar to that of the Pharisees, who were incensed at Jesus’ teaching that

others could inherit a heavenly kingdom they thought was reserved for them alone. They despised Jesus for offering the kingdom to poor, oppressed, weak sinners whom He made equal to them. In verse 15, the landowner asks, “Is your eye evil because I am good?” The “evil eye” was a Hebrew expression referring to jealousy and envy. God’s goodness and mercy produced in the self-righteous Pharisees the evil eye of envy. The rest of the workers received their wages without complaint or envy of others. In the same way, as Christians, we should rejoice when others come to the Saviour, as we should rejoice in the service others render to Him. He is faithful to reward us for our service as He has promised, and how He rewards others should be of no consequence to us, nor should it affect our devotion to Him.

The message in verse 16, “the last will be first, and the first last,” is that no matter how long or how hard a believer works during his lifetime, the reward of eternal life will be the same for all—an eternity of bliss in heaven in the presence of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as the apostle Paul. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different rewards in heaven for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life will be achieved by all equally. This is such a relief to someone like me, who didn’t come to know Jesus until the grand old age of 29 and who very often falls miserably short of expectations, despite every attempt!

♪ The Heart of Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-Zp586pvZg>

Time for prayer...

Let's take time to pray for:

- All who work to ensure that the world's resources are shared across the nations regardless of ability to pay
- Decision-makers of this nation, both in politics and in health care, whose actions affect all of us
- The leaders and decision-makers of the church, who must interpret the changing government guidelines in a way that benefits the majority – and for understanding that no decision is going to be perfect for everyone
- People we know who are struggling as a result of Covid, either socially or economically or because of long term effects on their health
- Those who have lost touch with society following isolation and are afraid to venture out
- Those who are ill, either with the coronavirus or other ailments that don't hit the news bulletins
- Our own contribution to the wellbeing of our world

You might want to pray aloud the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples. Use whatever version or language you wish!

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is 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.

🎵 **There is a hope**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_yv5yGZnBc

🎵 **And can it be**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu2uA6U4Fyg>

🎵 **Teach me to dance**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMeAyiZInIE>

A blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

Amen

And a song for harvest

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqpkWsR6Yew>