

Bulletin for Sunday 25 September 2022

Good morning friends.

Let's pause as we prepare to worship... and then praise God as we sing our first hymn:

Hymn: Morning has broken (R&S 45)

Prayers: God of creation, and re-creation,
with the blackbirds, the sunlight,
and all of your creation, we praise you!
You are a God of compassion:
you hear the cries of the needy,
and you call us all to live with love and care.
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and on everything we give in your service,
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Luke 16: 19-31

Reflection: From children's books such as 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' to traditional adult fiction like 'Jane Eyre', I think we expect that if a character is actually named in the title of a story, they will be the hero, or at least the main protagonist. So this parable is gently subversive, as Jesus names the poor man, Lazarus, who takes little part in the action, but gives no name to the rich man, despite his greater part in the story. Traditionally we have known him as 'Dives', but in fact that is just latin for 'rich' or 'wealthy'. Jesus doesn't use 'dives' as a name - the church over the centuries started to do that - but rather, by naming Lazarus, Jesus gives him, a destitute and powerless character, a quite unexpected level of respect. Although much of the parable's action takes place after death, its meaning is firmly for this current, earthly life. Lazarus was so utterly impoverished, Jesus implies, because the rich man had not lived according to the Law. The Hebrew scriptures make it clear over and over again that God expects us to help the poor and to share our possessions with the needy. The rich man in the parable utterly failed to do that. The Pharisees to whom Jesus told the parable were also apparently not keeping that part of the Law. And

analysis of this week's mini-budget, suggesting that fifty per cent of the tax cuts will go to just five per cent of the richest people, points to our continuing struggles with sharing wealth. This is surely a parable for us all to take to heart.

Hymn: For the healing of the nations (R&S 620)

Prayers: God of both compassion and justice
we pray, as we sing, for a just and equal sharing
of all that the earth you created affords to us,
and we hold before you the earth itself -
may all its beautiful, fragile, complexity
be appreciated and protected.
We pray for the hungry and the homeless...
and we pray for energy, courage and hope
for those who work to care for them.
We pray for the sick and the dying...
and we pray for strength, endurance and peace
for those who love and care for them.
May they all know that they are held
by your love, concern and understanding.
We hold before you our neighbours and communities,
rich and poor, known to us or unknown,
and especially those who we love.....
In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers,
including the unspoken prayers of our hearts. Amen

Hymn: Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! (R&S 740)

Blessing: May we live and work for God's kingdom
of love and justice and compassion;
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love,
this week, and always. Amen

Sunday at Six service on Zoom at 6pm this Sunday as usual - all welcome.

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