

Reflection for Trinity 17

I sometimes imagine myself in the position of one of the religious leaders of Jesus' day. While I hope I would have been one of those perceptive leaders, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, I worry that narrow-mindedness would get in the way. Imagine that you had spent years in earnest study to reach a position of authority. You follow the law faithfully. You are clear about the nature of God's relationship with humankind. But suddenly you are presented with this unexpected figure, and he is telling parables like the one's in today's gospel which, horror of horrors, depict you as the ones who haven't truly recognised God. So much so that those you look down upon will be going into heaven before you!

We are millenia away from the experience of those religious leaders, yet still a lack of imagination can sometimes prevent us from recognising God's work in unexpected places. These perceptive words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning draw upon the image of the burning bush:

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.

May we be the ones who not only say and do the 'right things', but recognise and respond to God as revealed in creative, challenging and sometimes unexpected ways.

Rev Hannah



NEXT SUNDAY 04.10.26 Harvest Festival
10.30am in the Church



OT Isaiah 5: 1-7
NT Philippians 3: 4b-14
GOSPEL Matthew 21: 33-end

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Day off on Monday

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St Thomas, Exeter

27th September 2026

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

10.30am in the Church

Today

Sung Eucharist

Hymn Numbers

81 Christ triumphant, ever reigning

335 Meekness and majesty

252 Inspired by love and anger

532 We have a gospel to proclaim

Wednesday 30th September

10am Holy Communion (BCP)

7.15pm PCC meeting in the hall.

Thursday 1st October

9.30-11am St Thomas Tots

10.30-12noon Knit & Natter at Jenny
Tuckett's house

Friday 2nd October

9.30am Morning Prayer

10am Staff Meeting



Collect

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Ezekiel 18: 1-4, 25-end

The word of the LORD came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die. Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

Philippians 2: 1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being

in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Matthew 21: 23-32

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not"; but

later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Intercessions

Lord of faith and truth

We bless your Holy name

Post Communion

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Notices

On Saturday 3rd October a few of us from St Thomas are going to Trans pride as part of Open Table Exeter. If you would like to join us, speak to Liz or Hannah. There is also an Open Table trans Pride gathering on the evening of Sunday 4th October. All welcome.

Harvest Festival you are invited to bring along items from the priority list suggested by Exeter Food Bank.

Tinned Meat
Tinned Vegetables
Tinned Potatoes
Tinned Fruit
Noodle Snacks (i.e. Pot Noodle / Mug Shot / Pasta'n'Sauce (etc)
Small jars of Coffee