

We Respond

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ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord. Should they cry to me in any distress, I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 144)

ANTIPHON: The Lord is near to all who call him.

RESPONSE: The Lord is near to all who call him.

LECTOR: I will bless you day after day and praise your name for ever. The Lord is great, highly to be praised, his greatness cannot be measured. **R.**

LECTOR: The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love. How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures. **R.**

LECTOR: The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, who call on him from their hearts. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! Open our hearts, O Lord, to listen to the words of your Son. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) You have laid down your precepts to be carefully kept; may my ways be firm in keeping your statutes.

Or

I am the Good Shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me.

TODAY'S READINGS Isaiah 55:6-9; Philippians 1:20-24, 27; Matthew 20:1-16

NEXT WEEK (26th Sunday of Year A) Ezekiel 18:25-28; Psalm 24; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 21:28-32.

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*First is last
and last is first*



20 September 2020 25th Sunday Year A

In the quotation, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways ...", the prophet Isaiah sets the scene for the parable of Jesus that Matthew shares with us in today's gospel. Trade Union leaders would not readily choose the story to promote the cause of equal rights and justice for their workers, yet the owner of the vineyard has honoured the contracts he made and the story reinforces all that Jesus does and teaches.

Jesus is forever seeking out those who have lost out in life or made a mess of their lives and adjusting their perspective and their prospects. Just think of the story of the Prodigal Son or the number of times that Jesus eats and drinks with those whom society has already cast aside. And every time he does this, Jesus calls forth the wrath of the self-righteous.

Many years ago I was introduced to the notion of 'lateral thinking' by a very entertaining speaker, who could tie his audience up in knots by presenting a series of conundrums, to which the answers were obvious but only when he gave them to you! He explained the theory of Dr Edward de Bono, who had realised that we all have a tendency to pigeon-hole our knowledge; filing it in such a way that particular problems lead us instinctively to pull out what we think is the appropriate file for the

answer. His theory was that the more creative we are, the more likely we are to be able to look along the files – laterally – and find the correct solution. My point is that, if we are to understand the teaching of Jesus, we need to reorder our files and take Isaiah at his word, realising that God's ways are not our ways.

I would suggest that we can only begin to unlock the mystery when we recall Jesus' warning that we should not judge others, and that we would do well not to try to take the splinter from another's eye until we have removed the plank from our own.

In the parable Jesus leaves us to fill in the gaps. The owner of the vineyard asks those who are still hanging around at the end of the day why they have been idle. We can only surmise why they had not been hired.

All that matters in God's topsy-turvy world is that it is never too late for a God of loving compassion and generosity. Long before Jesus came, Isaiah had got the message and was urging the wicked to let the Lord "take pity" on them.

Which of us dare suggest we do not need God's compassion? And once we accept that, we might be able to understand the paradox of the last being first and the first last.

Timothy J Buckley CSsR
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