



Worship resources Trinity 16

The Lectionary changes tack a little this week – at least from the perspective of the Gospel. While the continuous Old Testament readings continue to follow the Israelites in the desert (with a similar story to last week's, but focussed on water and thirst, rather than food and hunger), Matthew describes a moment of confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders, in which two questions are raised – where Jesus' authority originates, and who is finding their way into God's Kingdom. The water image becomes a captivating one for this week's worship – because like water that flows into any crack it can find, and that is not easily controlled or contained, God's reign appears in surprising places, and flows into the lives of those that we might prefer to keep out of God's kingdom.

May we be challenged and inspired by the radical, offensive inclusivity of God's reign this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

The issue of legalism – of prioritising law over love – may be thought as a "spiritual" problem only. However, as we allow this week's Lectionary to speak, we discover that the way the law is used in both so-called "sacred" and "secular" contexts can be equally life-giving and/or equally destructive. The challenge is to allow the law its proper place, and use it to lead us to life, while ensuring that the same gift of life is available to all.

May we our worship lead us beyond legalism into a life that clearly demonstrates the power of the law of love.

Exodus 17:1-7: The Israelites complain that they have no water, and Moses takes their complaint to God. God instructs Moses to strike the rock at Horeb with his staff and water flows out for the people to drink.

OR Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32: Though the people of Israel complain about God's ways, God indicates that it is their ways that cause them trouble and death. Yet, God claims all people as God's own, and exhorts the people to turn from their wicked ways to God's righteous ways so that they may live.

Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16: A teaching psalm reminding God's people of all that God has done, bringing God's people out of Egypt, leading with a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day, and splitting open the rock to give them water to drink.

OR Psalm 25:1-8: A plea for God to ensure that righteous people are not put to shame, and for God to teach God's people the ways of God.

Philippians 2:1-13: The apostle encourages the Philippian Christians to be united and to be like Christ in their humility, service and self-sacrifice, quoting the ancient hymn of the Church. He reminds them that they are to live out their salvation, trusting God who gives them the will and the power to do it.

Matthew 21:23-32: The religious leaders question Jesus' authority, but Jesus refuses to answer them because they can't answer his question about John's authority. Then he tells them a parable about two sons whose father asks them to work in the vineyard. One says no, but then does, and the other says yes, but doesn't. Jesus explains that like this, religious people are missing out on the kingdom, while outcasts are finding their way in.

BIBLE READINGS -

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=%0AExodus%2017:%201-7%0A%2BOR%0AEzekiel%2018:1-4,25-32%0Acw%20Psalm%2078:%201-4,%2012-16%0A%2BOR%0APsalm%2025:1-8%0APhilippians%202:%201-13%0AMatthew%2021:%2023-32

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord, we beseech thee,
let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church;
and, because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour,
preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

O Lord,
Hear the prayers of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

That we might be moved to forgiveness not seven times, but seventy times seven, we pray saying, "God of Forgiveness," and respond, "Hear our prayer."

That the church might confess hurtful doctrine, exclusive practice and misguided zeal and be the first to make restitution, we pray saying, God of Forgiveness,
C:
Hear our prayer.

That the leaders of the nations and the poor of the earth might sit down at table and rejoice together, we pray saying, God of Forgiveness,
Hear our prayer.

For all suffering the death of a loved one, who mourn words they did not speak when they had opportunity, that they might now gently forgive themselves. God of Forgiveness,
Hear our prayer.

That those in our parish who bear grudges for other members of Christ's church might be reconciled today as we share the peace. God of Forgiveness,
Hear our prayer.

That all who seek baptism and confirmation might daily be transformed by God's extravagant grace. God of Forgiveness,
Hear our prayer.

That those who are unloved in this world; those who are outcast and friendless,

might experience Christ's gentle compassion in this community of faith. God of Forgiveness,
Hear our prayer.

For courage to forgive others as we, ourselves, have been forgiven, we humbly pray. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Let us offer prayers to God for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts and for all in every danger and need.

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For all peoples and their leaders, for candidates for public office, and for justice and righteousness in the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who work, and for tenants and landlords.

Lord, have mercy.

For good weather, and for those who harvest and offer the fruits of the earth.

Lord, have mercy.

For all domestic and wild animals.

Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and the suffering, travelers and refugees, prisoners and their families, and the dying and dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our city/town/parish and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

O Lord our God, who sent your Son to save the whole world, hear the prayers we offer this day and strengthen us to press on toward the heavenly goal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

God of mercy,
through our sharing in this holy sacrament
you make us one body in Christ.
Fashion us in his likeness here on earth,
that we may share his glorious company in heaven,
where he lives and reigns now and for ever.

PRAYERS

God of all who wander in the wilderness,
you go before us as beacon and guide.
Lead us through all danger,
sustain us through all desolation,
and bring us home to the land
you have prepared for us. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God, our beloved,
you set before us the goal of new life in Christ.
May we live in the power of his resurrection
and bring forth the fruit of your gentle and loving rule. Amen.

Holy God,
you love justice and hate oppression;
you call us to righteousness and not to exploitation.
Give us generous and loving hearts,
and eyes to see the splendor of your reign,
that we may live in truth and honor,

and praise you for the transformation of our lives,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The image of water can be a helpful way into the theme for this week. Although it is only mentioned in the Moses reading in Exodus and in the related Psalm, it is reminiscent of Jesus' words in John that he offers living water. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus' response to the question of authority and his parable both indicate that, like the water from the rock, God's living water cannot be contained or controlled. Though the religious leaders would like to be the gatekeepers for God's reign, Jesus indicates that in the very act of doing this, they exclude themselves, while those who would seem to be excluded find their way in. This openness, inclusivity and welcome is characteristic of Jesus and his ministry, as described by Paul in his letter to the Philippians. This ancient hymn which describes Jesus' servanthood and self-sacrifice is Paul's call to treat one another with love and welcome. Finally, in the Ezekiel reading, and its related Psalm (25) God's ways are offered as the doorway to God's abundant, irrepressible life. Like water that finds the smallest of cracks to flow through, and that bursts out in even the most surprising places (a rock in the wilderness), so God's life – God's living water – flows into any life that has even the smallest crack open to it, and brings life and refreshing and welcome and inclusion.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: Who is 'in' and who is 'out' is the essential question of political and economic systems. Who gets to decide how things like debt and immigration and war get decided? On a global scale the question of who gets to share in processes and resources become even more difficult and important. As we face real issues with thirst through contamination of water sources, real issues of hunger, disease, displacement and hatred, the need for greater levels of inclusivity and transparency, and greater participation by ordinary citizens becomes increasingly important. In the Moses story the challenge is that water is provided freely for all, in spite of their grumbling, doubt and complaining. In the Gospel, Jesus makes it clear that God's grace is available to all, and that even those who are least likely to find a place belong, in spite of the attempts of the elite to keep them out. Ultimately, the world and its resources belong to all people. The challenge this week is how to live out of this truth in real and practical ways. Perhaps it begins by simply recognising that all people are our neighbours and are as deserving as we are to have their needs met and provided for. Then, this realisation must find

its way into our conversation, our civil participation and our routines of spending, consuming and discarding the things we use each day. It must also find its way into a life of radical hospitality in which we welcome all in Christ's name in whatever small, practical ways we can, while celebrating our differences and sharing God's grace. Ultimately, we have learned that the system of control by the few doesn't work – it inevitably gets undermined by ordinary citizens. We've seen this in music, publishing, dissemination of information and places of tyranny. So, the more we can open the doors – both of faith and of distribution of the world's resources – the closer we get to experiencing God's reign, and the closer we get to a peaceful, hospitable planet.

LOCAL APPLICATION: The radical inclusivity of Christ, and the constant, consistent merciful care of God for the fickle Israelite people, can be tough for us to swallow. We wrestle with the uniqueness of Christ, and the challenging message he preached, on one side, and the seemingly indiscriminate welcome he offered on the other. We like to feel like we are 'chosen', that we are 'in', and that we have the 'right way', but we need to be careful of becoming like the religious leaders who tried to be gatekeepers for God's reign and ended up excluding only themselves. We need to be careful of judging others by their doubts or complaints, and trying to keep God's blessing for ourselves, only to find the living water flowing out to them in the most unexpected ways. We may think we find life by "protecting" ourselves and our faith, by keeping out those whom we consider "unsavoury", but in fact these are our ways, not God's (as Ezekiel describes) and they do not lead us to life. Rather, it is in radical grace (like God in the wilderness and like Christ) and radical hospitality that life is found. These are God's ways, and they always lead us into the abundant life God's promised. So, the questions the Scriptures raise for us this week are these: Who would we prefer to keep out? Who do we allow to have authority and from whom do we withhold grace and authority? Who might be finding their way into God's reign in spite of us, and how can we change to become helpers rather than hinderers? And, finally, how can a greater openness to the unpredictable flow of God's living water, of God's grace, lead us deeper into God's life (in spite of our fears that it might somehow 'compromise' God's life)? God's authority, it is clear, does not need the recognition of the powers that be – thank God. But, this means, we had better be careful of becoming too friendly with any system or community that centralises power, authority or resources too much.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"Walking the Walk," the Rev. Danae Ashley, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2014/09/08/16-pentecost-proper-21-a-2014/>

"Is the Lord with Us or Not?" Sarah Jackson Shelton, Day 1 on Exodus 17:1-7 [http://day1.org/6105-is the lord with us or not](http://day1.org/6105-is-the-lord-with-us-or-not)

"A Passion for Christ's World," the Rev. Dr. Michael Foss, Day 1 on Philippians 2:1-13 [http://day1.org/1112-a passion for christs world](http://day1.org/1112-a-passion-for-christs-world)

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/year-proper-21-26th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Faith Formation Journeys on Phil 2: 1 - 13
<http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/philippians-childrens-sermon-series-2.html>

Sermons4kids.com Theme: Obeying God's commandments - Proper 22 (27) Year A **Object:** A coloring book **Scripture:** And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:1-3 (NIV)
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/stayinthelines.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

1st Reading Exodus 17: 1–7

607 As pants the hart for cooling streams
606* As the deer pants for the water
645* Father, hear the prayer we offer
646* Glorious things of thee are spoken
647* Guide me, O thou great Jehovah
431* Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour
435* O God, unseen, yet ever near
557* Rock of ages, cleft for me

Psalm Psalm 78: 1–4, 12–16

254 [At the Lamb's high feast we sing]
262 [Come, ye faithful, raise the strain]
647* Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

557* Rock of ages, cleft for me

1st Reading Ezekiel 18: 1–4, 25–32

638* O for a heart to praise my God

Psalm 25: 1–8

17* Lead me, Lord, lead me in thy righteousness
(Treoragh mé, treoragh mé, a Thiarna)

652* Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

712* Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord

2nd Reading Philippians 2: 1–13

250* All hail the power of Jesus' name

684 All praise to thee, for thou, O King divine

218* And can it be that I should gain

630* Blessed are the pure in heart

496* For the healing of the nations

454* Forth in the peace of Christ we go

91* He is Lord, he is Lord

523* Help us to help each other, Lord

211* Immortal love for ever full

94* In the name of Jesus

275 Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious

168* Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour

636* May the mind of Christ my Saviour

228* Meekness and majesty

102* Name of all majesty

392 Now is eternal life

173* O Jesu so meek, O Jesu so kind

285* The head that once was crowned with thorns

112* There is a Redeemer

114* Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown

117* To the name of our salvation

116 To our Redeemer's glorious name

The Gospel Matthew 21: 23–32

86 Christ is the King, O friends, rejoice

593* O Jesus, I have promised

136* [On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry]

[If Thou But Suffer God To Guide Thee
Where Cross The Crowded Ways Of Life](#)

[O For A Heart To Praise My God](#)

[Come Let Us To The Lord Our God](#)

[Forgive Us Now](#)

[The Ten Commandments Song](#)

[Out Of The Darkness](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[You Are](#)

[Creation's King](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

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