



God's Word for this Week

THE SIXTEENTH
SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

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.

THE OLD TESTAMENT READING

Exodus 17: 1-7

17From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' 5But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?' 4So Moses



cried out to the Lord, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' 7The Lord said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.' Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7He called the place Massah* and Meribah,* because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'

Reflect and Pray

It is easy for us, who have seldom been truly thirsty and have never faced the likelihood of death from lack of water, to be critical of these people. In addition to the fact that we have never walked in their shoes, we have been reminded in recent chapters how Yahweh saved them again and again from apparently hopeless situations. Surely they should understand that Yahweh will rescue them again now—but they don't. But if our throats were parched and our children were crying for a drink of water, we might forget God's past providence too.

What are the situations in your life that challenge your faith in God's constant presence and guidance. Perhaps the answer to a prayer comes at the end of an honest conversation about these things with God!

THE EPISTLE READING

Phillipians 2: 1-13

2 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was^{*} in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name

that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

¹² 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; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

What comes to mind in these verses is the reminder that Jesus emptied himself, becoming a slave and being born in human likeness. To



empty yourself is to remove any pre-conceived notions of who you are in God and to allow God himself to fill you. Perhaps this is offering ourselves as a living sacrifice to God so that God may ‘enable you both to will and to work for his good pleasure’.

THE GOSPEL READING

Matthew 21: 23-32

²³ 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?’ ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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?” ²⁶ But if we say, “Of human origin”, we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.’ ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ ‘What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, “Son, go and work in the vineyard today.” ²⁹ He answered, “I will not”; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father^{*} went to the second and said the same; and he answered, “I go, sir”; but he did not go. ³¹ 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. ⁵²For 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.

There are often those of us who make bad decision in our lives for one reason or another but manage to take a good hard look within and see our errors and change our hearts (metanoia). These, like the tax collectors and prostitutes in the Gospel this morning who listened to John the Baptist and changed their ways, are the people that God is far more able to work with. On the other hand there are those who are so set in their opinions regarding what is right and wrong that they are impenetrable. They may say one thing, like the son in the parable who says he will work in his father's vineyard but his words do not mirror his actions.

We need to ask ourselves, which are we?

THE PSALM 78

- 1 Hear my teaching, O my people; ♦
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
- 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; ♦
I will pour forth mysteries from of old,
- 3 Such as we have heard and known, ♦
which our forebears have told us.
- 4 We will not hide from their children,
but will recount to generations to come, ♦
the praises of the Lord and his power
and the wonderful works he has done.
- 12 For he did marvellous things in the sight of
their forebears, ♦
in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
- 13 He divided the sea and let them pass
through; ♦
he made the waters stand still in a heap.
- 14 He led them with a cloud by day ♦
and all the night through with a blaze of fire.
- 15 He split the hard rocks in the wilderness ♦
and gave them drink as from the great deep.
- 16 He brought streams out of the rock ♦
and made water gush out like rivers.

