

God's Word for this Week

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity



The Collect of the Day

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
Teach us to offer ourselves to your service,
that here we may have your peace,
and in the world to come may see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Exodus 20: 1-4, 7-9, 12-20

20 Then God spoke all these words:

2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ⁵you shall have no other gods before* me.

4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

7 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

8 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹For six days you shall labour and do all your work.

12 Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

13 You shall not murder.*

14 You shall not commit adultery.

15 You shall not steal.

16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

18 When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid* and trembled and stood at a distance,¹⁹ and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die.'²⁰ Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin.'

If you allow yourself the time to read and re-read slowly through the commandments you will see the perfect sense they make for society and the individual. Today is a good opportunity to review your life according to these guidelines. God wishes for the individual to have life in abundance. The removal of negative thoughts or actions in our life can greatly assist with this and the commandments are fashioned around this. Of course, we are bound to remind ourselves of the words of the Christ who says 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and love your neighbour as yourself. On these two directives hang all the laws and the prophets. This makes perfect sense! If you love God and others, the commandments pretty much fall into place for you!

The Epistle

Philippians 3: 4b-14

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more:⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ,* the righteousness from God based on faith.¹⁰I want to know Christ* and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death,¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal;* but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³Beloved,* I do not consider that I have made it my own;*but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly* call of God in Christ Jesus.

‘Pressing on to make Christ his goal’ sees Paul still striving and still journeying to Christ and that new understanding. He has come a long way farther than many of us could achieve and it’s clear through this writing that Paul now seeks to cast aside the pulls of the world and achieve a higher understanding given only through Christ. Is your prayer today the ability to reach this higher understanding and closeness to Christ? I know mine is.

The Gospel Reading

Matthew 21: 33-46

33 ‘Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.” ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.’

42 Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;*

this was the Lord’s doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes”?

⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.* ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.*

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Attaining the Kingdom of heaven is not something achieved by force or destruction. Notice how the religious authorities of Jesus’ day were so caught up in defending their idea of the law that they failed to realise the Messiah in their midst! The Kingdom of God is not only an understanding but a way of life. A true understanding relationship with God produces the fruits he wills us to achieve within our own lives and the lives of others. The Vineyard is a gift from God; we, the inhabitants do not reside here due

to the fact that we destroy anyone who wishes to benefit from the Vineyard; rather our gratitude for the gift promotes the sharing of each harvest's yield.

Psalm 19

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of God ♦
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 One day pours out its song to another ♦
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
- 3 They have neither speech nor language ♦
and their voices are not heard,
- 4 Yet their sound has gone out into all lands ♦
and their words to the ends of the world.
- 5 In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun, ♦
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.
- 6 It goes forth from the end of the heavens
and runs to the very end again, ♦
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart; ♦
the commandment of the Lord is pure
and gives light to the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦
the judgements of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold,
more than much fine gold, ♦
sweeter also than honey,
dripping from the honeycomb.
- 11 By them also is your servant taught ♦
and in keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can tell how often they offend? ♦
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
- 13 Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me; ♦
so shall I be undefiled,
and innocent of great offence.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

be acceptable in your sight, ◆
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.