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September 27, 2020

Pentecost 17  
Year A

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**SCRIPTURE READINGS:**

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalms 78:1-4, 12-16

Philippians 2:1-13

Matthew 21:23-32

**SELECTED READING  
AND THEME:**

Matthew 21:23-32

The gracious will of God

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Another day has dawned,

**and we are bathed in light.**

The earth opens up her wonders to us,

**and we are blessed to encounter them.**

God continues to love us and hold us in grace.

**We know we are family and welcomed here.**

Let us worship together.

**Yes. Let us worship God.**

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Ever-present God,

we come here today to learn a bit more of

what is your will for us,

for our world and for all of creation.

Open our hearts to your words of life

that we might hear

and open our minds to imagine the deeds

we might do as your Spirit of grace

dwells and grows within us. Amen.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Let us come to God in humble prayer.

Hear our confession today, gracious God,

as we admit we can be so immature in our ways –

lazy;

self-absorbed;

quick to anger;

eager to judge.

We can be self-righteous,

and overly sensitive to criticism.

We like to complain that things aren't fair

and become resentful when those we dislike  
or are our adversaries are treated with the same favour  
and respect that we are.

We quickly sort our neighbours into categories,  
placing some on the A-list

and relegating others to second class.

Some even make the throw-away pile.

Too often we are not very mature, not very grown up,  
not very willing to deal with complexity.

Forgive us and guide us we pray  
that we might always be faithful followers of Christ.

Amen.

### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

God doesn't shake a finger at us  
or throw arms up in despair at our failings.

Instead, God embraces us with grace  
and calls us out of our failing into right living.

All we need do is step into that embrace.

We are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### **PRAYER OF ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING**

God beyond all understanding,  
we are glad to be the inheritors  
of your story of grace,  
living in the communion of saints  
that are part of salvation history.

We are grateful to have parables  
and poems, prophecy and genealogies  
from the beginning of time,

all pointing to your involvement with your people.  
They are a legacy of wisdom and a pathway to joy.

So, we will not hide them away.

We will sit down with our children  
and tell them tales and the story of the wonders of God.

God of all time,  
we rejoice that you intervene in our lives,  
and open our eyes to the glory of the earth,  
the beauty of community  
and the joy of being people of justice and compassion.  
All praise be unto your name. Amen.

## **DISCIPLESHIP THOUGHT**

Parents of teenagers may relate to today's parable. It is not unusual to receive a promise that a job will be done, and it not be, or done, but in a time that 'suits me'. It is frustrating, as is the inevitable sense that your ability to change the situation is limited. One can imagine it is this kind of frustration that the chief priests and elders are feeling as Jesus refuses to be accountable to them, disrupts their notions of authority and opens up God's kingdom to people they can by all rights exclude. Like parents constantly trying to understand a teenager's mind, the church is constantly trying to understand what the gospel says to us. With what attitude do we do this? One of grace that liberates us all or one that excludes many and shackles us to rigid legality?

## **OFFERTORY SENTENCE**

We are grateful for all the good things  
and blessings we have in our lives  
and so we respond by sharing something  
of what we have in the giving of our offering today.

## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

As we give you these gifts of money God,  
know they come with our commitment  
to be people of your way.  
They are gifts of love for you,  
to be used in your mission in the world.  
May they bring new life and liberation.  
Be with us as we work for good. Amen.

## **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

Gracious God,  
we would be conscientious followers of your way,  
aware we are called to be full  
of the spirit of compassion and empathy.  
Help us to ensure that what we do  
and how we act within our world,  
is done, not out of ambition or conceit  
but because of our regard for the folk  
with whom we share this world.  
Deepen our understanding  
that there is no benefit to self-interest.  
Teach us your ways, so that we may all flourish  
when the hand of friendship and camaraderie is  
extended wide to everything in heaven and earth.  
We know what it looks like when we do your will.  
So make us good neighbours, peacemakers,  
joy bringers and hope bearers.

May we be people who willingly  
get our hands dirty restoring the earth.  
Open our hearts to welcome the refugee,  
the widow and the orphan.  
May we build bridges  
and breakdown the walls of prejudice and bias.  
May we release the chains of those  
who are locked in oppressive lives.  
May we sit alongside the lonely  
and reach out to those who find it hard  
to negotiate a fruitful life. Amen.

## **COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION**

We have experienced the grace of God  
as a liberating power in our own lives.  
As we go from here,  
we go to be people who impart  
that liberating grace to the world.

May God's Word be upon our lips;  
Christ's way be the path we tread  
and the Holy Spirit's breath give us life.  
This day and always. Amen.

## **HYMNS**

### **Exodus 17: 1-7**

All my hope on God is founded  
Guide me, O my great Redeemer  
Our God, our help in ages past  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me

TiS.560 AHB.465  
TiS.569 AHB.478  
TiS.47 AHB.46  
TiS.222 AHB.157

### **Psalms 78: 1-4, 12-16**

Give ear, my people, to my teaching

TiS.41

### **Philippians 2: 1-1**

All praise to thee, for thou, O King divine  
And can it be, that I should gain  
At the name of Jesus  
From heaven you came, helpless babe  
May the mind of Christ my Saviour  
O Lord my God, when I, in awesome wonder  
Thou didst leave thy throne

AHB.180  
TiS.209 AHB.138  
TiS.231 AHB.170  
TiS.256 AT Everybody.261  
TiS.609 AHB.537  
TiS.155  
AHB.206

### **Matthew 21: 23-32**

Crown him with many crowns  
I danced in the morning  
Rejoice, the Lord is King  
Seek ye first the kingdom of God  
When we walk with the Lord

TiS.228 AHB.163  
TiS.242 AHB.183  
TiS.216 AHB.147  
TiS.745 SA.75  
AHB.531