

The Gathering – first video

Welcome - [OLIVER]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Today's gospel muddles the worldly-wise principle of quid pro quo. Jesus talks of hospitality that has nothing to do with recompense or payback. With compassion and grace, God receives into God's house all who come. Welcome to St Mary's Cathedral.

Collect for Purity - [JO]

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Confession

[KELVIN] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed,

and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[OLIVER] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gloria - [ROSAMOND THOMAS]

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect - [OLIVER]

O God most high, you are slow to anger and rich in compassion. Keep alive in us the memory of your mercy, that our angers may be calmed and our resentments dispelled. May we discover the forgiveness promised to those who forgive and become a people

rich in mercy. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Ministry of the Word – second video

Reading: Exodus 12:1-14 - [OGICHUKWU]

A reading from the Book of Exodus

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged* their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.'

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.' So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry

ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
For the Word of God among us,
For the Word of God within in,
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35 – [KELVIN]

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mathew.
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly

distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?” And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.’

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Sermon [KELVIN]

On the face of it, there doesn't seem like there's a lot of good news in this week's gospel. The parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew Chapter 18 ends with the unforgiving servant being handed over to be tortured. And Jesus seems to say that God is like that too and will hand us over to be tortured if we don't forgive one another.

But that whole conception of God is a horror show. Jesus is painting a picture of God who is like some kind of warlord or oligarch. Fabulously wealthy and with untamed power. Is God really like that? And not only wealthy and powerful but someone who keeps people in servitude and hands them over to be tortured if they are not as magnanimous as he is.

Before I unpack this a bit, take note of the hyperbole here – the oligarch in the story has money beyond normal imagination.

The debt of ten thousand talents is wealth beyond reason. The phrase means something more like “A billion, squillion, trillion pounds”. It is the greatest amount that language could express at the time. And the debt the servant refused to forgive was just a day's wages. A trifle in comparison.

The kind of wealth and power that the oligarch has is beyond our imaginations.

It isn't unreasonable to ask of this parable, "Are you sure about that one Jesus? Is God really like that? Is that the gospel of love that we believe you came to share?"

A few months ago, when lockdown was first happening, I remember going out into the empty streets. The world was weird – suddenly weird. And although we could only go out for a short time each day, I kept meeting people I knew. No masks at that stage but we did try to keep our distance.

And one of the things that I kept hearing in people's conversation at that time, after they had spoken about how weird and strange it was, was a deep sigh and the words, "Well, I suppose we've brought it on ourselves".

I found that a slightly odd statement at the time and I still do now. I've never been quite clear how I've brought this on myself. But there was perhaps a sense that globalisation had contributed to the speed that the virus spread around the world – and we're all part of that globally connected world.

And "Well, we've brought this on ourselves" was said with a shrug to me several times over.

Now in some parts of the world, the idea of karma, is very much part of the religious scene. The idea that our past actions decide our fate. Good actions and good intentions will result in good being done to us. Bad actions and bad intentions have the opposite effect.

These themes are strong in the religious world view of India.

And these ideas have fed into the religious traditions in other parts of the world. It isn't just the hippies of the 1960s who discovered karma.

We have our own versions of it that are fairly mainstream.

"What goes around comes around..." is one version of it.

"We've brought it on ourselves..." is another.

In the parable that we are dealing with this morning, I think there's the nearest that we come to Jesus using that kind of idea in his teaching.

A servant who has been forgiven much, refusing to forgive a fellow servant, gets what's coming to him when the boss puts his foot down. Enough is enough he says and sends the ungrateful lout off to be tortured.

It is fairly easy to understand on one level. But on another it leaves us with a picture of God that is just awful.

I've said many times – if the God you've discovered is a tyrant then don't worship him.

So, what's Jesus on about? What's he saying?

I am reminded that when I was a small boy, if I ever made a sulky or grumpy face, my elders and betters would say, "Don't make that face or if the wind changes, you'll be stuck with it".

And that gives me a clue about this parable. I don't think Jesus is telling us that God is a wealthy tyrant with a torture dungeon set aside for us if we don't behave.

I think that it is more that if we don't orient our hearts to love those around us, we're in danger of being stuck with an image of God that is made in our image and not informed by beauty and goodness and love.

If we can't love in the small things, we'll never get our heads around the depth and height and breadth of love that God has for us.

For if all we have in our hearts is human bitterness and resentment then we will be tortured. Not so much tortured by God but tortured because we have never learnt of God's loving nature. And if the wind changes, we'll be stuck with that way of looking at God and the world forever.

This parable is more of an instruction than anything else.

It says: Love flagrantly.

Love lavishly.

Love passionately.

Forgive – endlessly.

And you might find out the true nature of God.

Love especially those who don't deserve your love.

And you will discover the God whom we know as Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intercessions [ROBERT]

Holy God we bring you our prayers for our world, for society and church, for loved ones and for ourselves.

We pray for the industry and businesses in our city, for those concerned with maintaining production and service. May our shared work express your love and caring for all who toil and all who benefit from their industry.

We pray for our society, for the policies and actions that come from narrow vision and unjust treatment of others. We pray for St Mary's

Justice and Aid Network. May we be a people of justice, proof of the forgiveness of Your kingdom.

The Gospel of Matthew reflects on what it is to be the church. The words of Jesus call us to live the gospel of forgiveness and challenge. In particular today we pray for the Church of the Holy Name, Cumbernauld; for St Matthews, Possilpark; and for the Companions of Our Lady and St Mungo, Sister Helena and Sister Alison Joy. Remembering your church worldwide we pray for the Anglican Church of South America. May we, your Church, have the wisdom of your spirit in what we say and do.

We pray for any who are unwell at this time, who struggle with pain or fear. We hold up in prayer any of our loved ones. May each of us enjoy the hope and the comfort of your love.

We hear the teaching of Jesus that calls for forgiveness. We remember the times we hold on to stories of hurt with anger. We know the forgiveness in Christ, and also the ongoing sense of failure to forgive, and the fear of being judged. May we each know your peace in our hearts, the joy of letting go.

We pray for those who are grieving, remembering especially the family and friends of Margaret Turner. In our Year's Mind we remember Leslie Melville.

We give thanks for all whose lives have spoken to us of your forgiveness and love.

May they Rest in peace. And Rise in Glory.

Your Kingdom is joy, forgiveness and love; may your people enjoy your grace. Amen.

Communion – third video

Offertory - [OLIVER]

Seventy times seven ... Jesus tells Peter that's God's kind of generosity—way more than average, beyond what's expected. It's generosity that keeps this Cathedral open as a place of welcome to all.

If this place has touched you, I invite you to give back—both as a way of giving thanks and as a way of increasing this Cathedral's vocation to others. Go to www.thecathedral.org.uk and click 'Donate to St Mary's Cathedral'. With your help, the growth of this place will be beyond what we could imagine as possible.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in
heaven and on earth is yours.**

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

Eucharistic Prayer - [OLIVER]

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, Father,
in every place and at all times.

All power is yours. You created the heavens and established the
earth; you sustain in being all that is.

In Christ your Son our life and yours
are brought together in a wonderful exchange.

He made his home among us that we might for ever dwell in you.

Through your Holy Spirit you call us to new birth
in a creation restored by love.

As children of your redeeming purpose
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven,
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you,
most loving Father,
for the gift of your Son born in human flesh

He is the Word existing beyond time,
both source and final purpose,
bringing to wholeness all that is made.

Obedient to your will he died upon the Cross.

By your power you raised him from the dead.

He broke the bonds of evil
and set your people free to be his Body in the world

On the night when he was given up to death,
knowing that his hour had come,
having loved his own,
he loved them to the end.

At supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.
He broke the bread,

and gave it to them, saying:

“Take, eat.

This is my Body: it is broken for you.”

After supper, he took the cup,

he offered you thanks,

and gave it to them saying:

“Drink this, all of you.

This is my Blood of the new covenant;

it is poured out for you, and for all,

that sins may be forgiven.

Do this in remembrance of me.”

We now obey your Son's command.

We recall his blessed passion and death,

his glorious resurrection and ascension;

and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.

Made one with him, we offer you these gifts

and with them ourselves,

a single, holy, living sacrifice.

Hear us, most merciful Father,

and send your Holy Spirit upon us

and upon this bread and this wine,

that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,

they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,

and we may be kindled with the fire of your love

and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body

to live and work to your praise and glory;

may we grow together in unity and love

until at last, in your new creation,

we enter into our heritage

in the company of the Virgin Mary,

the apostles, and prophets,

and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

Lord's Prayer - [KELVIN]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Communion - [OLIVER]

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

Amen.

Music at Communion - [FERGUS]

The Call – Vaughan William

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:

Such a Way, as gives us breath:

Such a Truth, as ends all strife:

Such a Life, as killeth death

Come, My Light, my Feast, my Strength:

Such a Light, as shows a feast:

Such a Feast, as mends in length:

Such a Strength, as makes his guest

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:

Such a Joy, as none can move:

Such a Love, as none can part:

Such a Heart, as joys in love

Post Communion Prayer - [JO]

God of peace, in this eucharist we have been reconciled to you and to our neighbours. May we who have been nourished by holy things always have the courage to forgive. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen

Amen.

Blessing - [OLIVER]

This service has been a wonderful display of gifts given generously by many people. May we pass on the kindness we have received, sharing it with everyone we meet.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

A hymn and materials for Young Church are available on the online worship page at www.thecathedral.org.uk/worship.