

**Sunday September 20th, 2020:
Little Paxton Church**

9.15am – 9.45am: Morning Service with readings and prayers.

**There will also be a mid-week service in Little Paxton Church on
Wednesday September 23rd at 10.00am.**

Great Paxton Church

10.30am - 11.00am: Morning Service with readings and prayers.

Open from 11.00am to 4.00pm for private prayer/quiet time.

Southoe and Diddington Churches are now open daily

Please observe social distancing and use hand sanitizer if visiting.

Follow us on Facebook @ ThePaxtonsBenefice.



A Time for Prayer.

Compassionate God, you display your almighty power in loving us without regret.

In the human heart of Jesus your Son you have shown us how far love can go.

Give us a love that is forgiving, generous and gentle like his; that we may recognize and welcome him in our brothers and sisters. May our hearts reach out to the poorest and those we find it hard to love with the unlimited love you have given us; in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We take time to pray for our families and friends.

Those struggling with illness; all who work in the caring professions, those who are exhausted and in need of rest.

Lord, reach out in your love and healing power to those who struggle in any way. We pray for those whose lives have been devastated by wildfires in the USA; those living in war zones, those who seek a safe haven in an often-hostile world. Show us how, in our own ways, we may be generous in bringing help and comfort in the power of your spirit and in the compassion of Jesus. Amen

A Blessing.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Be with you, now and always. Amen

FOUR

**Sunday September 20th, 2020: The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.
The benefice of the Paxton with Diddington and Southoe
“Keeping in Touch” Edition 26**



Generosity

Annette writes: Hello everyone!

Yes, it's a pumpkin. One of the biggest ones I have ever seen. I don't know who grew it, but it was an entry in the Little Paxton Vegetable and Flower Show on September 12th. I am frequently captivated by the variety, diversity and immensity of God's creation and the coming season of harvest is one such time when we can celebrate the fruits of the earth.

Today's reading from Matthew's Gospel is all about the amazing generosity of God, generosity which some may view as a contradiction of human versions of fairness. It takes us to Jesus' world of farming and the owner of a vineyard who needed extra labourers to help maybe with harvesting grapes. You can read the narrative on Page 2 and some reflections on the passage.

As I write, we are adjusting to extra restrictions in the UK on social gatherings, worries about the availability of testing, particularly in some areas of the UK, and a rise in daily cases of Covid-19.

We can all be forgiven if sometimes we find this prolonged pandemic wearing. It leaves us with so many questions about the future and continues to affect so many aspects of our lives. But faith invites us to trust in the generous and compassionate presence of God. It doesn't matter who we are, how "religious" we are, whether we are certain or confused about faith, God longs to draw alongside us in these hard times. And the invitation is there to share His generous love with those we whom we spend our days.

Take care and God Bless.

With love and prayers, Annette

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ONE

A Reading from Philippians Chapter 1 v 21-23

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.

Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

The Gospel Reading: Matthew Chapter 20 v 1-6

Jesus said to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right."

So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?"

They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first."

When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat."

But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So, the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

TWO

The Prayer for the Day.

Holy God, faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your generous love
that we may truly worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reflections on God's generosity.

How can we understand the story of the workers in the vineyard?

As he often does, Jesus takes a very familiar biblical scene, a vineyard in this instance, which would have produced abundant wine for its community. He weaves a story around an owner who pays the men who worked hard all day in the heat the same as those who only work for an hour in the evening. Surely, Jesus is encouraging unfair employment practices!

But this story is all about the Kingdom of God – or Kingdom of Heaven as Matthew names it. His gospel contains a lot of stories which Jesus told about the nature of God's kingdom; how our world would look if everyone followed God's amazing ways of love, forgiveness, generosity and kindness. Jesus is saying our human ways of looking at things aren't always God's ways.

All of the workers that day had basic needs, and all required the same remuneration of one denarii coin. This was the cost of a day's labour, enough for a man to live on and feed their family. Whether the worker had worked all day or just an hour, the owner treated them the same.

Of course, the men who had worked all day complained bitterly.

But the owner says: if I chose to be generous and give everyone the same, why should you be jealous?

Jesus ends up by concluding – the first shall be last and the last first.

Those who might seem unimportant and lowly in life are hugely loved and matter to God. Those who think they are of first importance in God's kingdom could do with a dose of spiritual reality.

Can you imagine a world where all people, whatever their ability to earn might be, receiving the same amount of money to live on to meet their needs?

Can you imagine a world where there is no poverty, no extreme wealth, where millions don't have to worry where their next meal comes from to feed their children?

I wonder, what do you think about this story?

THREE