

Matthew 23 is a prolonged and devastating condemnation of hypocrisy and of ostentatious manifestation of religiosity as so frequently practised by the Scribes and the pharisees. This is combined with exhortations to do as they say, not as they do. It seems to me that the abiding thrust of this whole passage is to assert the requirement of meekness summed up in particular by phrases like “whoever humbles himself shall be exalted and whoever exalts himself shall be humbled. Now oddly enough as I wrote these words my thoughts went back to the householder and his labourers and also to something Jesus had said just before: “it will be hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven”. Is it reasonable to equate Caesar with the householder? Can we regard the first of the householder’s employees as the rich man and the others as the poor ones? Perhaps we can. After all the first employees had a job and the others did not ie the rich are the first and the poor last - they got a job in the end and were paid the same. In heaven it will be the other way round: the rich will get there in the end; maybe they will just have to spend a bit more time in Purgatory.

Martyn Dyer

Entrance antiphon: The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world and that which contains all things understands what is said, alleluia.

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11

Psalm 103: Response: Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12: 3-7,12-13

Sequence

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia!

Gospel: John 20: 19-23

Memorial Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Communion Antiphon: They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke of the marvels of God, alleluia.



Pentecost Sunday Cycle C, 2022

Weekly Reflection: The Lilies of the Field (2) From Matthew 8-19 the narrative changes from the individual pieces of advice considered in last

week’s piece and is more concerned with accounts of banishing evil spirits, feeding the hungry with loaves and fishes, or general injunctions to take up the cross and follow Him, or parables indicative of virtues such as forgiveness rather than more specific teachings on particular things. When this does return the uncompromising demands of the good life return too when the young man asks what good deed he must perform to be sure of eternal life. He has observed the commandments but is this enough, he asks. “If you would be perfect” comes the reply, “sell everything you possess and follow me”. As I write this it is repeatedly the case that the sayings of Jesus Christ cannot always be taken literally – and this is not so far a difficulty. However, I have always found that there is a problem with the parable of the householder who hires labourers throughout the day and pays those who have only worked one hour the same as those who have borne the burdens of the whole day [Matt 20].

What are we to make of the householder’s retort: “the last will be first and the first last.”? Remember this parable starts by likening the householder to “the kingdom of heaven”. The householder is also forthright about his property rights: “am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?”. I have reflected on all this for two days now but still do not know how it should be interpreted, so I’ll leave it and move on and see if enlightenment arrives eventually. Easier to interpret is Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees [22:17-23] who ask him whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. They are trying to trip him up and using his frequent warnings about seeking worldly ways, and possessions. His answer is to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s. In other words, not all that is of this world is bad. Right and wrong exist and we must all recognise this and choose accordingly whether we wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven or not.