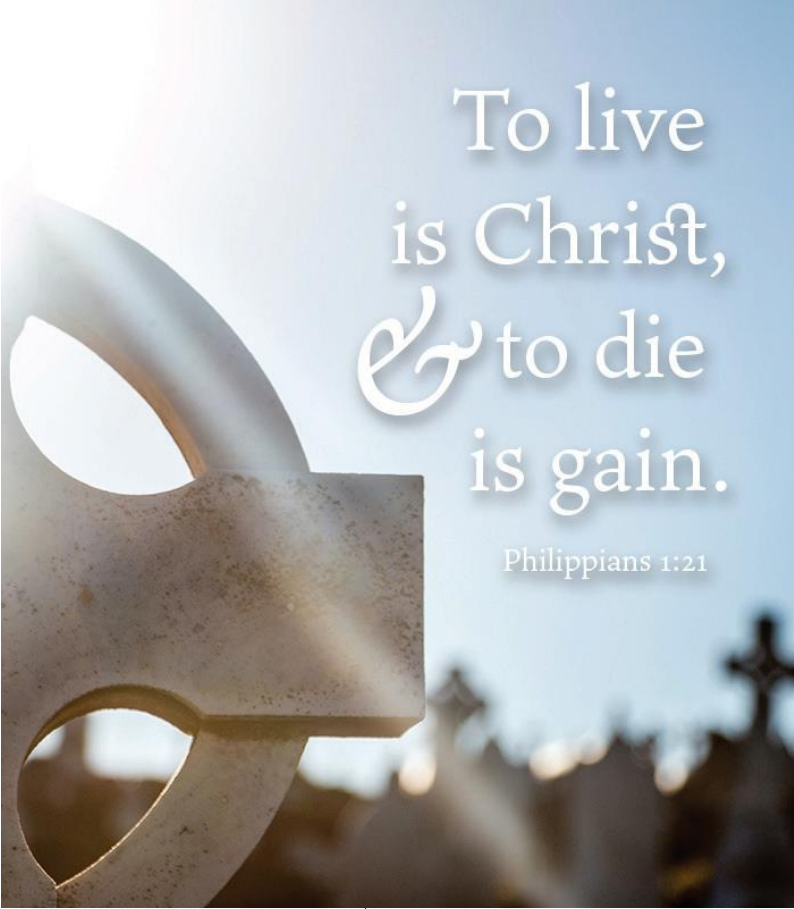


**Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**September 20, 2020**



To live  
is Christ,  
& to die  
is gain.

Philippians 1:21

The Lord be with you. Let us pray.

Direct our hearts, O Lord, by your merciful reign, because without your help it is impossible to please you. Grant this, we pray, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.  
*(Gelasian Sacramentary, 7th Century)*

**S**eek the Lord who abundantly pardons. Sinners may seek no better thing, for he alone is our light and salvation. He pardons with such extravagance that even sinners like us may be confident when the assaults of sin and death come our way. We are assured that in death we will have the gain of seeing the Lord's glorious face. In the meanwhile—during this life—we have Christ, so we ought to live lives worthy of him. Some will do so for more years than others and some better than others; but all will receive the same reward: the salvation of living eternally in the beauty of God's glory. We will dwell in

the house of the Lord forever with our eyes fixed on his beauty.

Let us pray... Steadfast God, you are slow to anger, and your mercy endures forever. We stand in your presence as beggars, completely undeserving of your mercy and grace. Awaken in us such a sense of gratitude that our own lives may reflect your overflowing generosity; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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

*For to  
me to live is  
Christ,  
and to die  
is gain.*

Philippians 1:21

How many times, as a child, did you look in some dark hiding place for a friend while playing hide and seek, yet never see him? You suspected where he was hiding but it was only after spending enough time in the dark to allow your eyes to adjust that you saw some dim light reflecting off his cheek. After a long time in hiding, the cleverest kid even had to stick out a leg so that you noticed him.

Our first reading (Isaiah 55:6-9) tells us that God is not one to be found in the nature of the world around us. We may suspect he is hiding there, but we will never find him—nor are we able to reason our way to God. Yet, because he has revealed himself in his word, God may be “found.” His ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. God is near when one takes the time to seek him in his own revelation of himself.

Though the things of this dark world would

*So the last  
will be first,  
and the first  
last.*

Matthew 20:16

distract us, our Psalm (27:1-9) says that those who gaze on the beauty of the Lord, know his light and salvation. Troubling times come and go but the Lord shelters the believer during those times. Seek God's face as Moses and David did; you will not be disappointed as he makes himself present to you—even while the world does its best to make you anxious.

It may be difficult to consider imprisonment as an advancement of the kingdom, as Paul does in our second reading (Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30). We have a tough enough time thinking everything will be okay if we are not on Church Council next year. Yet, while in jail, the apostle eagerly expected good things from God. Even if he should die, Paul knew God was in control of matters. With such an example, we too know how to behave. We may be courageous in the face of whatever befalls us. We may stand firm no matter the shaky ground. We can strive for the gospel without fear of opposition. We may suffer for doing so, but this too is for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom.

Our Gospel reading (Matthew 20:1-16) contains a parable for those in congregations who think, "We have always done it this way; and this way means my way." Serving the kingdom of God is not something just for the old-timers. He calls in the last hour too. When he calls, those called must be faithful to respond but they are not alone in this responsibility. Those who have served the Lord for years, must be grateful for God's wise choice when he calls newcomers into the work of his kingdom. Those called this year are as dear to the Lord as those he called years ago. Let us strive together for the gospel.

# Kingdom Wages

Find the 33 **bold** words from Matthew 20:8-13, 16 (ESV)

E S E E A B X D D O F F R D B  
B L E N G S E R B I R L E B U  
A A E G O N A W R I A I C W R  
G F G V A Y I S E S L Y E T D  
R N E R E W T N T P H A I H E  
E V I N R N D X E G C D V G N  
E U I V B W T R D V A G E U B  
S V M E I O I H M O E N D O J  
O M A S T E R E N W O I H H U  
L L A C D I C N D W E H X T E  
O N L Y A P S E E R O C E S C  
L A B O R E R S R Q U R U A E  
D E L B M U R G I Y O O K Q T  
E Q U A L S N N H M H C H E D  
N E K E Q J M J G I N S P T D

And when **evening** came, the **owner** of the **vineyard** said to his foreman, “**Call** the **laborers** and **pay** them their **wages**, beginning with the last, up to the first.” And when those **hired** about the **eleventh hour** came, **each** of them **received** a **denarius**. Now when those hired first came, they **thought** they would receive **more**, but each of them also received a denarius. And on **receiving** it they **grumbled** at the **master** of the **house**, 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 a denarius? So the last will be **first**, and the first **last**.”