

***This short homily preceded the meeting to present to the church the outline plans for Transforming Trinity***

Isaiah 5:1-7 and Matthew 21:3-end

The parable today was created by Jesus to speak directly to and about the Pharisees.

The Gospel writers included the parable to speak to the church. It's not there to gloat because Jesus took the Pharisees down a peg or two, but as a warning to the church. It's about motivation.

God's purpose was that Israel demonstrated His qualities of love, compassion, faithfulness, kindness, forgiveness and joy and that a relationship with Him was possible.

The Vineyard is Israel.

The Landlord is God.

The fruit the tenants are to produce is a harvest of souls whose primary goal is to know and love God, the God who first loved us.

But being in charge of the vineyard was just too tempting because there was the opportunity for status, reputation, authority, power and wealth. How can it go so wrong?

I'll tell you a parable.

There is a broken pane of glass in the bedroom window. It lets in a terrible draft. And the rain. And bugs and it's possible a contortionist might reach through, open the latch, get in and murder everyone in their beds!

What is your motivation for fixing it?

Purely practical, no question or criticism for getting it fixed.

The bedroom is occupied by a relative who is very poorly. The cold draft causes them to cough painfully, the noise from outside disturbs them when they are dozing fitfully, even the moths and bugs are an irritation flapping round the bedside light.

Now your motivation is very different.

Out of love, compassion, kindness and concern you want this practical thing done quickly, in fact you are glad to do it because you can't heal your relative...but you can do this for them.

Your motivations are pure, both practical but also loving and compassionate.

You are not the only person caring for the patient. They also have quite a few visitors from their church. Temptation sets in. Your motivations become compromised.

You let it be known you were the one who got the window fixed. You let it suggest (unspoken) you are the one bearing the brunt of caring and that you care more. Reputation and status and ego get muddled with compassion and caring and a practical solution.

Does it matter? The window got fixed and it was good for the patient.

When it comes to the church it does matter.

Like Israel, we are to show God's character to the world. His love, compassion, faithfulness, kindness, forgiveness and joy.

All we are and all we do should be for His glory.

That doesn't mean we can't enjoy what we do, feel fulfilled in what we do and feel excited about it, it's expected that we will!

We simply have to guard against mixed motives so that it's not about us...but to the glory of God.

How?

Actually, it's quite simple.

Transparency, openness, honesty, collaboration.

A - we need to get the window fixed.

B - I was just thinking that.

C - I know a guy. He fixed my door. But I can't be here.

D - I'm free...if you can get him, I can be here.

A - I have a screen at home, it might minimise the draft while the work is done, but I can't get it here.

D - I'll bring it in my car, no worries.

And B whispers to C (get your guy to send the invoice to me).

Let's pray.

Loving and generous God we hold before you Transforming Trinity.

There are practical things to fix.

There are aspirational things to equip your church for service.

There are aesthetic things that speak of your might, majesty and beauty.

By your Spirit, grant us a desire to do all we do for your glory. To hold all the plans lightly, knowing that you work your purpose out,

we need not strive. May our motivation be pure and our joy in you complete. This we ask in Jesus name.

Amen.

**Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 8 October 2023**