

MONDAY
17 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 24:15-24
 Psalm 78:1-8
 Matthew 19:16-22

TUESDAY
18 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 28:1-10
 Psalm 107:1-3. 40. 43
 Matthew 19:23-end

WEDNESDAY
19 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 34:1-11
 Psalm 23
 Matthew 20:1-16

THURSDAY
20 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 36:23-28
 Psalm 51:7-12
 Matthew 22:1-14

FRIDAY
21 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 37:1-14
 Psalm 107:1-8
 Matthew 22:34-40

SATURDAY
22 AUGUST
 Ezekiel 43:1-7
 Psalm 85:7-end
 Matthew 23:1-12

REFLECTION

How you hear the Gospel readings this week will be largely determined by where you stand economically. A day labourer, such as someone on a zero-hours contract, would hear with joy that their pay will be the same as anyone else's. Someone with few possessions or someone who never gets invited anywhere could hear the story of the wedding banquet or of the rich young man as an encouraging sign that material possessions don't give automatic entry to the kingdom of God, but that God invites irrespective of status.

The Gospel on Saturday is a hard reading for religious folk, since they might hope that being scrupulously religious would get them preferential treatment. Not so! The most religious among Jesus' contemporaries are bidden to be humble rather than ostentatious in their religious practice. It seems that the reward is that the usual way of things is overturned – "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (Matthew 19:30), and it challenges us to rejoice in others going before us. Such humility is about recognising the worth of others in God's eyes and rejoicing in it.

In our attempts at humility help us, dear God,
 to put ourselves to one side and rejoice in others
 and their place in your kingdom.
 Help us to let go of false values
 and to find peace in your new order.

PRAYER

HYMN WRITERS

PART III – JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER (1807–1892)

Whittier is probably best known for penning the hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind", which was originally written as a poem called "The Brewing of Soma". It conjures up images of a group of Vedic priests (an Indian sect) gathered around a blazing fire and cauldron, where they concoct and drink a powerful hallucinogenic potion extracted from plant stalks. As it takes hold they become frenzied until they're in a wild state of "drunken joy", believing they're experiencing divinity. Whittier's point was that some Christians were intoxicated by a heady mix of euphoria and rapture in worship, and that "music, incense, vigils drear, and trance" created a false sense of divinity. By contrast, Whittier believed that God could be heard as a "still, small voice of calm".

Born in Massachusetts of Huguenot ancestry, Whittier was raised on a farm. (It was discovered that he was colour-blind when he was unable to distinguish ripe from unripe strawberries.) There was only just enough money to get by and Whittier was never physically robust. He became an avid reader and devoured his father's books on Quakerism and their teachings, with their emphasis on humanitarianism, compassion and social responsibility, became the foundation of his ideology.

He was a magazine editor and founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, devoting much of his life to the abolitionist cause. Any hopes of a political career were dashed because his vocal demand for the emancipation of slaves alienated many influential people. Nevertheless, he considered it morally and socially right and necessary. He travelled widely, attending conventions, securing votes, speaking and lobbying politicians. He was mobbed, stoned and run out of town for this troubles, and in 1838 the offices of *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, of which he was the editor, were burned down by a pro-slavery mob.

He produced two collections of poetry: *Poems Written During the Progress of the Abolition Question in the United States* and *Voices of Freedom*. In 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, and he turned to other forms of poetry for the remainder of his life.

Edited by
 Caroline Hodgson
 and
 Heather Smith



John Greenleaf Whittier

Tenth week
 after Trinity

Monday 17 August to
 Saturday 22 August
 2020

WEEK

01420 88222 www.rpbbooks.co.uk rp@rpbbooks.co.uk @redemptorist



Jesus and the rich young man in
 Grace Church Chiangmai, Thailand.
 Freedom Studio/ Shutterstock.com

FSC
 logo