

This short act of worship has been produced for you by
Revd Papa Owusu.

If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few
moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would
normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as
they pray for you.

Welcome to our act of worship this morning on the 7th Sunday
after Trinity.

Call to Worship

As we enter God's holy presence this morning,
are you ready to hear again about God's kingdom?
Come, open your hearts and minds
to see the kingdom around us and within us.
Come, and worship the living God.
Amen.

Hymn: Jesus shall reign where'er the sun (Singing the Faith 328)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words
<https://youtu.be/5U4IMtvp6bg>

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

For him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head;
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song;
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
the prisoners leap to lose their chains;
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.

Let every creature rise and bring
its grateful honours to our King;
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen.

Isaac Watts (1674-1478)

Let us Pray

Marvellous and mighty Lord,
we are forever grateful
for all the good gifts you give us,
for eyes to see,
for ears to hear,

for a brain to understand,
and a heart to love.
We praise you, Lord.

God of surprising love, you have called us to be your treasures, to be those who love and serve you by helping meet the needs of others. Jesus reminded us that we were like mustard seeds that could grow into mighty shelters for those who felt abandoned; that we were like yeast placed in flour which causes the whole dough to rise and to be fruitful for the nourishment of God's people, that we are also nets, cast into the unknown sea, gathering people for the Lord that they might be healed and saved. You place so much hope and trust in us. Please help us not to fail you. We bring before you this day persons and situations which need your healing love. Help us to be vehicles of that word for these dear ones. Give us courage and empower us to serve you boldly and joyfully, for it is in the healing love of Christ that we offer this prayer. **Amen**

Prayer of Confession

Diligent Lord, who watches over us at all times, be with us all these days. We confess that we have allowed a host of worries and frustrations to crowd out your word for us. As you give us peace and your transforming love, also forgive all those times when we have been less than faithful disciples. Gently visit us again with your healing powers. Restore our hope and courage

and joy for all the times ahead. We ask this in the name of the Master Healer, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Here is some wonderful news! While we were worrying and fretting, God has been at work in our lives offering healing and peace. Receive these gifts in the name and love of the Lord our God.

Amen. Thanks be to God

Today's reading: Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52 (NRSVA)

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

The Parable of the Yeast

He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

Three Parables

‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So, it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Treasures New and Old

‘Have you understood all this?’ They answered, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’

Time to Reflect

We live in a world which for some time has been in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. We are well aware of the grave impact

of COVID-19 on our lives. Most of us are being weighed down with worry, fear and anxiety and we are not sure what to do next. There have been tragic losses of lives, loved ones, health and income. Some are also dealing with the loss of their previous lifestyles and struggling with this ‘new normal’ way of life. For some it is about the ambiguities regarding what to do and what not to do in these times. Coupled with these are the helpless situations caused by civil unrests, lives being overtaken by fear and brutality, people being crippled with fear and grief because of who they are.

Obviously, we are in extraordinary and challenging times and being pulled in different directions and we may be looking for something to fill a longing deep within each one of us, a longing that sends us seeking... seeking for someone who will be with us and by us in these perilous times – Someone whose voice could re-echo the comforting words as presented by the Prophet Isaiah:

*“Don’t be afraid, I’ve redeemed you.
I’ve called your name. You’re mine.
When you’re in over your head, I’ll be there with you.
When you’re in rough waters, you will not go down.
When you’re between a rock and a hard place,
it won’t be a dead end—*

These words can only be descriptive of our quest for God's presence in our lives - a presence that can only be revealed by the gracious God of love. We long for the reign of this God - for His kingdom and presence to become realized in this tumultuous world and in our lives.

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been listening to the parables found in Matthew 13. These are parables that speak to us; and how we hear them hangs on the condition of our hearts. If we listen well, these stories will change us. These parables teach us about God's kingdom, and identify us as children of the kingdom, showing us how to live that identity out. Another thing we need to remember as we read these parables, is that they are stories of the present kingdom of heaven. Even when Jesus explains some elements in terms of the end of the age, he is referring to a kingdom that is already among us, already here in the person of Jesus Christ.

In our reading today from St Matthew's gospel, Jesus, in describing a kingdom that is not far off in the distance nor in some exalted place up there or somewhere out there, used five short parables with each one presented in a different way to think about the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God).

Jesus in these stories, describes the reign of God by using analogies that are literally very down to earth - the Mustard

Seed and Yeast; Hidden Treasure and the Pearl; and the Net. These images would have been familiar to the original audience, many of them being drawn from everyday life.

All these parables together build our understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven. From them we learn that:

1. The Kingdom of Heaven may seem very small at the beginning but will grow. Like the Mustard Seed and Yeast, the Kingdom will grow and permeate far and wide. These parables therefore offer hope, promising great endings from small beginnings. Jesus intended to reassure the first disciples, who faced daunting odds; and these parables continue to encourage us too when things that are going on in the world today overwhelm us and we seem not to know what to do. Jesus promises that God's power makes everything possible.

These parables are also encouraging us to exercise faith and patience...as in God's realm, small beginnings have the potential to grow so large to shift the world on its axis.

Like the yeast permeating every part of the dough, God's transforming power is permeating the world, our communities, and each one of us. It may sometimes seem as if God's reign is far away from us. It is my prayer

that we may have the eyes to see God's reign hidden in our everyday lives. All that we need to do is to trust God's transforming presence and love in the midst of all the chaos that are around us.

As the Yeast can only do its work when it is mixed with dough, we are not called into seclusion but to be involved in the world. Jesus therefore calls us to go into all the world, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching (28:19-20).

2. The Kingdom of heaven is of great worth or value. Both the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl have to do with objects of great value which spark great commitment. Someone had to give everything to purchase them.

Describing the kingdom as treasure buried in a field suggests that the kingdom needs seeking out. Following Jesus may not seem at first to be what we hoped or expected it to be. Sometimes we will stumble upon it like a treasure buried in a field, and sometimes we will only discover it after diligent searching.

We are being urged to abandon whatever we think is most important in life and concentrate entirely on what God is doing in the kingdom that is already here and is

- already active. Let us give up everything for the Kingdom.
3. In the Kingdom of God, the good, the shady and the bad do exist together, even within our own selves. The parable of the Net stresses the present openness of the kingdom to all who would want to enter and the great judgment to come, in which the bad will be separated from the good. When the net is cast into the sea it catches all kinds of fish, good and bad. The fishermen indiscriminately pull in all the fish and wait to sort them out later. We live in a world where too much time is spent trying to figure out who is in and who is not. Let God take care of the sorting in God's own good time. Judgment belongs, not to us, but to God.

This parable may be encouraging us as disciples of Christ to take an open approach to evangelism. It is our duty to bring people in rather than keeping them out. The Pharisees took the opposite approach, serving as gatekeepers and judges. Patience in Judgement is a significant grace of God. Our concentration should be on God's limitless grace. We need to be grounded in God's limitless grace and extend such to others

As I said in our recorded podcast for last week regarding the parable of the weeds among the wheat, I would like to re-emphasise here that this parable is not calling us to

overlook sin and we must therefore be careful not to interpret it as prohibiting church discipline. In Matthew 18, Jesus gives a highly specific protocol for dealing with sin within the church (18:15-17). Jesus charges the church, when faced with evil, to confront it.

With all the horrible, daunting, negative and worrying things going on around us, we are still unperturbed because we know that the reign of God is not far away and that it is present with us and within us as people of God. In Christ Jesus, we find the God of creation even closer to us than the air we breathe; and He is constantly at work in us. God is embracing us even in our state of brokenness and transforming us in the process.

Although the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated and it is here with us, I do agree with the retired Presbyterian theologian Carl Frederick Buechner that 'the kingdom of God is still under construction and we are still under construction. But that kingdom is growing. The good news is that God so loves the world that God is continually at work in our lives in the world, in order to draw us, in love, closer and closer to God's self and to each other.'

Amen.

A time of prayer (trusting that others pray with us)

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the good news of your

kingdom that you hide like a treasure in our heart, for the leaven which is able to penetrate to every area of our life - for the seed that is able to grow into a mighty plant.

Lord, help us we pray to value that which you have given us - to make following Christ the most important thing in our daily lives - to concentrate above all upon the doing of your will, and sharing of your love. Holy Spirit help us to continuously share the good news you have proclaimed through Jesus with one another, and with the entire community around us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer...**

Lord Jesus, words cannot express how thankful we are that You consider us to be Your children; Your treasure, Your pearl beyond all price. Words cannot express how grateful we are that nothing: Angels, demons, death, life can separate us from Your love!

Father God we ask for your encouragement and inspiration in all areas of ministry in the church, pour out your blessing on all who work for the spreading of your kingdom.

We pray for your Church throughout the world with its variety, diversity and richness and for all Christians who are eager to learn more of your message and your will for us. We pray for our Circuit Ministers, and all who lead us to your truth.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

Grant that all of us, your church, may be able to renew our relationship with you and may find your peace, your strength, your grace and above all your presence.

Help us as a congregation to be outward looking, so that what we find within our fellowship we may share with those outside, for the benefit of all and for your greater glory.

Father we pray that as we worship and praise you today, we do so with a joyful and expectant heart, so that we may be nourished and strengthened in spirit to serve you in our communities.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

Almighty Lord we ask for your guidance and protection in all areas of lives. We pray for your wisdom upon all who lead and hold positions of authority.

In these everchanging and unchartered times we pray for World Leaders and government ministers in every nation. We pray for the situation with the UK and China to be resolved peacefully.

We pray that those who lead and take on great responsibilities may not simply wish to seem great in the eyes of others, but may genuinely serve their people, searching continually for policies and strategies which will be for the good of all,

especially for the weakest and most vulnerable.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

We pray for those who have being affected by the coronavirus, and natural other disasters.

We pray for the multitudes in every country who are opposed to war and are ready to walk the road of peace; hear our prayer and grant us insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with the willingness to share, to war with peace.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayers**

Father we ask for your faithful presence in our homes and for all homes in our churches in Enfield, and beyond; pour out your spirit of love, of friendship, of kindness, patience and forgiveness.

We pray for our homes that they may be filled with your presence.

Make them homes of peace and kindness, of holiness and hospitality, of grace and of goodness.

Father help us to show openness, love and tolerance to all, to care for our neighbours and to be more aware of the needs of the people around us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

Father we ask for your firm holding when our journey is hard, especially our current situation with the Covid-19 pandemic; pour out your strength to those who are sick in body mind or spirit. We pray for your healing power on them. Father give all who suffer, your peace in their pain, your strength in their weakness and your comfort in their sadness

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayers**

Father we ask for your reassurance and comfort; pour out your welcoming love as we pray for those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them, for members of our families and our friends who have died. Help us all to experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit within us, and the fellowship of the church family around us until we are reunited once more in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayers**

Father we ask you to accept with joy our thanks and praise for all you have done and continue to do for us; fill us we pray, with your light and our darkness that we may show forth your wondrous glory.

Grant that your love may so fill our lives that we may count nothing too small to do for you, nothing too much to give and nothing too hard to bear.

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son our Saviour Jesus Christ – **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Please pray this prayer that the Lord taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn: Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart (Singing the Faith 545)

Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

<https://youtu.be/YxvXGgSlRcs>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Ancient Irish 8th century hymn;
trans. Mary Byrne, 1905, and versified by Eleanor Hull, 1912

Blessing

Lord, it's not up to us to sort the bad from the good,
the wheat from the weeds.

Rather, send us out to love everyone equally,
and to do everything we can to promote your kingdom.

Amen.

Go in peace,
knowing that nothing can separate you from the love of God.
And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you,
the love of God, embrace you,
and the presence of the Holy Spirit surprise and encourage
you,
both now and forevermore. **Amen**

Thanks be to God. Amen

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