

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheets

Sunday, 26 July, 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use if you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. With thanks to David Innes, Mark Gilks and the Connexional team.

Opening Prayer

Lord, open the eyes and ears of our understanding today as we prepare our hearts for worship. We want to see you with our spiritual eyes today. Amen.

Hymn: *Singing the Faith 451, Open the eyes of my heart, Lord*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrw-k7bl3KE>

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.
Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.

To see you high and lifted up,
shining in the light of your glory.
Pour out your power and love;
as we sing holy, holy, holy.

Refrain

To see you high ...

Holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy, holy,
I want to see you.

Paul Baloché

Let us pray together

Lord our God, you require truth in the inward parts. We do not wish to deceive but at times we are not honest with ourselves or honest with others. Take any deception, known or unknown and pour out your Spirit of truth. Today we receive your Holy Spirit and ask that as a cool glass of water, you will refresh and cleanse us today of all sin and duplicity. We give you thanks that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is his gracious word: 'your sins are forgiven.' **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Genesis 29:15-28

Today's Gospel Reading:

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Hymn For all the saints – 745 STF

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OaBgaMcOvM

Time to Reflect

If someone had told you this time last year that you would be going into your bank wearing a mask, or that the Government had banned singing in Church, you might have checked if they'd missed their medication.

Actions that seem as best odd, if not actually counter cultural have become the norm. It is a useful reminder of how for the collective good we have agreed to some very strange requests.

Christianity is often described as topsy-turvy. It turns the values of the world upside down; the first become last, the poor are blessed, and the gentle will take over the earth.

This radical aspect of our faith is easily hidden. Churches and Cathedrals are often seen as tourist attractions; most Christians don't look like revolutionaries; while the Christian faith is branded by the media as quaint, old fashioned, nerdy, and uncool.

So, it is refreshing when a church leader speaks out on a political issue to uphold Christian values, upsetting the politicians of the day and jarring the media image of the church.

It is also helpful for us to get past some of the comfortable familiarity of the Gospel and reconnect with its counter-cultural message.

That powerful message can be found in favourite parables like the mustard seed, the leaven in the bread, the buried treasure, the pearl of great price and the dragnet (Matthew 13: 31-33,44-52).

These parables tell us about the Kingdom of Heaven and traditionally ones like the mustard seed and the leaven of the bread are seen as growth stories. Something tiny becomes big and important. Children

love this sort of story, rather like Jack's beanstalk. It's also comforting when we look around our small church and see ourselves as the small seed ready to grow into a giant tree.

Now, there's nothing wrong in this way of thinking, but we can miss the counter-cultural edge of the parable. The thing is, the mustard seed, proverbially the smallest seed (actually, it's not!) is in fact an invasive plant that farmers must clear, or it will take over a garden or a field. It's a weed! And an amazingly fast growing one at that. So, Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God is like a weed.

Leaven in Jesus' day was a popular symbol for corruption. It was linked to putrefaction and uncleanness. A woman would search the house for any leaven and burn it all as part of the preparation for Passover.

It's as if Jesus is saying in his parables that the Kingdom of Heaven is like "rust" or even a "virus".

This is not only counter-cultural, but positively subversive!

But what are the parables seeking to subvert? Well, it's the Kingdom of Earth with its war, terror, love of power, desire for wealth and privilege, xenophobia, and racism. A world that stands in sharp contrast to the template of the Sermon on the Mount.

How are we to deal with this earthly kingdom? Well, we are going to corrupt it! We are going to corrupt the corruption.

The Gospels paint a picture of an alternative universe hidden in the midst of our broken world. An alternative that operates by the logic of Christian love. We are part of the Kingdom of Heaven within the Kingdom of Earth, as we live our lives through acts of love, mercy, compassion, and justice.

The Apostle Paul suggests that Christians should not "become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you". (Romans 12:2)

Brothers and Sisters, the world is intolerant of this inner kingdom. It crucifies its messengers, literally and figuratively. But when we live in it, we have the joy, greater than finding any buried treasure or obtaining the greatest pearl ever known.

Hymn 626 STF Even though I walk -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NM14VZVu0og

A time of prayer

Dear Father, I thank you for the ongoing work in my life. I know it will continue until you take me home. Thank you for sins forgiven, for a life with you now, and a life with you in the hereafter.

We pray for the Methodist Church, nationally and worldwide. We think especially today of Hampton fellowship and the work of The Extra Mile.

We pray for the universal Church and the churches that have met through technological means during this time. We pray for the church in Montserrat and their community on that small island.

We pray for all those who have suffered loss in this present coronavirus situation.

We thank you for every act of kindness done during this time and all the imaginative ways that ministers and lay workers have used to keep in touch with their congregations.

We pray for those who are in need of healing, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Lord in your mercy, **hear these prayers.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Singing the Faith 638, THROUGH ALL THE CHANGING SCENES OF LIFE,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVJxhpcj6o>

Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

Of his deliverance I will boast,
till all that are distressed
from my example comfort take,
and charm their griefs to rest.

O magnify the Lord with me,
with me exalt his name;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.

The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just;
deliverance he affords to all
who on his succour trust.

O make but trial of his love;
experience will decide
how blest are they, and only they,
who in his truth confide.

Fear him, you saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;
make you his service your delight,
your wants shall be his care.

*Nahum Tate (1652-1715) and Nicholas Brady (1659-1726)
Based on Psalm 34*

A prayer of blessing

Lord, I have heard the good news that you accept and love all people, including me. Grant that whatever I do this day I will be responding to this love with a humble and thankful heart. **Amen.** (Taken from Day 26 of Methodist Prayer Handbook, p. 76 by Gwenllian Knighton, supernumerary minister, Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit).

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