

worship@home resources for 26 July

CALL TO WORSHIP

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

**From the east to the west,
from the north to the south,
God's Spirit moves across the face of the
earth.**

We come to worship, united by God's Spirit,
to celebrate God's faithfulness
and proclaim God's love!

Let us worship our God together.

HYMN TiS 129 Amazing grace
Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)

that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

As grace first taught my heart to fear,
so grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come:
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we've first begun.

John Newton 1725-1807 *alt.*

For one of many YouTube versions see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G72NuCLEGM&list=TLPQMjEwNzlwMjDyJOikekZ9rw&index=12>



PRAYER

Faithful God,
Jesus taught that where our treasure is,
there will our hearts be also.

**We come today bringing our treasures—
all that we have and all that we are.**

We come seeking your treasure—
treasure that does not decay or disappoint.

**Share with us the treasure of heaven,
that we may boldly embrace it and share it with others.**

Loving God,
our hearts are often set on the fading treasures of this world:
our energies and time are spent
in the pursuit of wealth and personal security
and we are anxious about so many things we cannot control.

**You call us to know you and love you
in and through others.**

Have mercy on us, Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news: in Christ we are loved and forgiven.
**May our living reflect the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.**

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 105:1-11

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him;
and speak of all his marvellous works.

Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Search for the Lord and his strength;
continually seek his presence.

Remember the marvels he has done,
his wonders and the judgements he has uttered,

O offspring of his servant Abraham,
O children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

He is the Lord our God;
his judgements are in all the earth.

He is mindful of his covenant for ever,

the promise he made for a thousand generations,
the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance.'

Romans 8:26-28, 38-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ...

... For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:31-34, 44-46, 51-53

Jesus 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.' 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.' Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. ...

'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.' ...

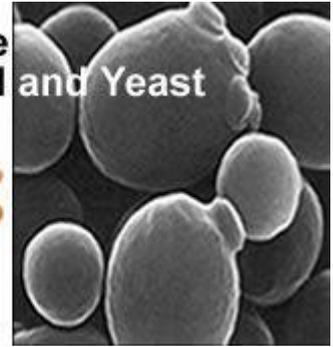
'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.' When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.

REFLECTION

Jesus tells some funny stories. In recent weeks we've heard stories about a careless farmer randomly sowing seed and another story about weeds disrupting the growth of a farmer's crop and what to do about it. This week there are further stories drawn from everyday life about a mustard seed and about yeast, and later about treasures.

For us, mustard is something we buy in the condiments aisle of the supermarket and yeast comes in small foil sachets ready to be added to what we are baking. It was quite different back in Jesus' day. While the mustard seed was famously small, it was an unusual choice to plant in one's field. It grew more like a large weed, reaching perhaps 1.5 or 2 metres tall, scarcely a tree. But the point is that Jesus' mission to establish the kingdom of God, while small and easily overlooked, would nevertheless seed a large and growing community of people that would eventually turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Likewise a small amount of leaven – more akin to a sourdough starter culture – could transform a huge batch of dough. If Jesus had been speaking these parables today perhaps he would have told a story about a tiny but contagious virus that started in a single place but grew to infect and disrupt the whole world ... so it is with the kingdom of God.

Parable of the Mustard Seed



Then there is talk of treasure ... treasure hidden in a field (one form of first century banking ... see the later parable about hiding a talent in the ground in Matt 25:18) and treasure found by someone looking for it in the form of a beautiful pearl. And finally Jesus speaking of treasures new and old. The kingdom of God is like the treasure – so valuable that it's worth selling everything one has to obtain it – something old but also fresh and new in the words of Jesus.



Elsewhere Jesus warns about earthly treasures that rust and decay, urging people to store up treasure in heaven (Matt 6:19-21). What do we most treasure? What could we not bear to lose? Where does Jesus' message about the kingdom rate in our lived priorities?

In these challenging times that we are living through, our thoughts are easily distracted and disturbed by daily briefings about coronavirus numbers and its spread. Where is peace to be found? How are we even to begin to pray when we feel anxious or fearful? The wisdom in Paul's letter to the Romans is that God's own Spirit intercedes for us in sighs or groans too deep for words. We may not be able to see now how all things are working together for good, but the Spirit knows our hearts and also knows the will of God, which is to bring abundant life and light into our lives.

Despite our worries, Paul today would assure us that not even the threat of coronavirus can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Let us hold firmly onto this hope, for this is what can help bring peace to our hearts in the midst of these dark and troubling days.

HYMN TiS 624 Christ be my leader

Christ be my leader by night as by day;
safe through the darkness, for he is the way.
Gladly I follow, my future his care,
darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.

Christ be my teacher in age as in youth,
drifting or doubting, for he is the truth.
Grant me to trust him, though shifting as sand,
doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.

Christ be my Saviour in calm as in strife;
death cannot hold me, for he is the life.
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its stain
can touch my salvation: with Jesus I reign.

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Youtube version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ym8iB29G6IU>

OFFERING

Gracious God,
you love us so generously and bless us with the treasures of your kingdom.
We offer our response through our gifts of money and the service of our lives –
may they be used to sow seeds of love, justice and peace in the world.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Creator God,
you have made us for yourself and you alone can satisfy our needs.
Hear our prayers for your world and for your church.

Source of all wisdom ...

We pray for leaders of nations,
including our Prime Minister Scott Morrison and State Premier Daniel Andrews,
and for the decisions they are making that shape the fate of others
and the well-being of the whole planet.

When we are tempted to put all our trust in human cleverness,
knowing that we don't have answers to the problems we face,
help us to look to you for wisdom that our hearts may be satisfied.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Source of community ...

We pray for the people in our community,
for those who have been forgotten during this pandemic –
including artists, musicians, young people out of a job, those living alone.

When we become self-centred and indifferent to the needs of others,
help us learn from you, who welcome every person.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Source of all hope ...

We pray for your church and all who minister in your name,
that we would rightly respect ancient truths and yet be open to new insights.
When we struggle to share your good news with others
and are not sure how to respond to those whose lives are devoid of meaning,
help us to turn afresh to you for your inspiration.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Source of all compassion ...

We pray for those known to us who are in need this day –
especially those who have lost loved ones to Covid-19
and those working at the front line of battling this pandemic.
We lift before you now those whom you have placed on our hearts this day
and in the silence we name them before you now ...

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

And we pray now using the words Jesus taught us, saying ‘**Our Father in heaven ...**’

BENEDICTION

May the Holy Spirit fill you and inspire you
with the amazing truth
that nothing is able to separate you
from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

SENDING SONG TiS 782 Go now in peace

Go now in peace, go now in peace,
may the love of God surround you
everywhere, everywhere you may go.

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For YouTube version see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRW1E0FzXek>