



## Service for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2020

*A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.*

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 105: 1-3

**105** Give thanks to the LORD,  
proclaim his greatness;  
tell the nations what he has done.  
<sup>2</sup> Sing praise to the LORD;  
tell the wonderful things he has done.  
<sup>3</sup> Be glad that we belong to him;  
let all who worship him rejoice.

HYMN: How shall I sing that majesty

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 How shall I sing that majesty  
which angels do admire?  
Let dust in dust and silence lie;  
sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.  
Thousands of thousands stand around  
thy throne, O God most high;  
ten thousand times ten thousand sound  
thy praise; but who am I?

2 Thy brightness unto them appears,  
whilst I thy footsteps trace;  
a sound of God comes to my ears,  
but they behold thy face.  
They sing, because thou art their Sun;  
Lord, send a beam on me;  
for where heaven is but once begun  
there alleluias be.

3 How great a being, Lord, is thine,  
which doth all beings keep!  
Thy knowledge is the only line  
to sound so vast a deep.  
Thou art a sea without a shore,  
a sun without a sphere;  
thy time is now and evermore,  
thy place is everywhere.

*John Mason*

### PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Gracious and Holy God, we come to worship You today with thankful hearts for all Your love and goodness to us.

You come as the Good Shepherd, searching for us when we lose our way, bringing us home to the safety of Your fold. When we feel lonely, You come as a friend and companion, reaching out to us in our need. When we feel hurt and vulnerable, Your healing hands reach out and touch us. When our faith falters, You shine as the light of the world, reminding us that You are always with us.

You meet all our needs. We praise and adore You for all that You are and for all You have done for us.

Forgive us, Father, that we fail You so often, neglecting the needs of Your people in the world, and sometimes even our own families and friends. We have not loved You with all our heart, mind, soul and strength; we have not loved our neighbours as we love ourselves and as we hope to be loved. We have marred Your image in us and in others.

Merciful God, touch us with Your forgiving power, that we may know Your blessing and be comforted. We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus and we pray together in the words Jesus taught us....

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING: St Matthew 13: 44-46

#### *The Parable of the Hidden Treasure*

<sup>44</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like this. A man happens to find a treasure hidden in a field. He covers it up again, and is so happy that he goes and sells everything he has, and then goes back and buys that field.

#### *The Parable of the Pearl*

<sup>45</sup> "Also, the kingdom of heaven is like this. A man is looking for fine pearls, <sup>46</sup> and when he finds one that is unusually fine, he goes and sells everything he has, and buys that pearl.

#### REFLECTION I

Today's passage from Matthew's gospel is part of a series of parables about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus spoke of the different ways in which we search for, discover and allow the kingdom to grow within us. However, the three verses we have read this morning are important to me because they set a value on the kingdom: it is priceless, incomparable and so wonderful that nothing else can take its place.

I have never had the experience of discovering treasure in a field, or even in the gardens of different houses in which I have lived. Nothing more than a few pieces of broken pottery that may have been special to someone years ago. The pearls which my late husband John gave to me on our wedding day are still precious to me, bringing back many happy memories of our life together. As I look around my room now at the photographs of my family, I realise how much they all mean to me: treasure indeed! But the pearl of great price is my faith in a loving God, the companion who has been with me since childhood.

For some people, this treasure is hidden from them; they come upon it quite by chance, like the treasure in the field. A certain event in their lives, possibly the celebration of marriage or the sadness of bereavement, a chance meeting, a book or poem, can speak to them about the God who loves them.

For others, the pearl is something they go in search of, knowing that there is a longing in their lives that nothing else can satisfy. When we discover this treasure – this pearl – we understand the value and joy it brings to our lives.

The poet Katherine Melville found that her daughter did not share her faith. She believed her mother was holding on to an 'outworn creed'. It is not easy to pass our faith on to others; but the poet expressed her faith in these verses, which I share with you now...

He is the Truth, the Life, the Light, the Way.  
All I could need or want, I find in Him.  
Friend of the friendless, courage for the day,  
Constant companion when the path is dim.

How could I put another in His place,  
Who has been more than friend or life to me?  
How meet the coming years without His face  
Waiting at journey's end to welcome me?

Call me old-fashioned – stubborn – what you will.  
Steadfast, unmovable, I shall remain  
Rooted and grounded in the Word until  
He shall appear, who maketh all things plain.

Yes, she has discovered the pearl of great price. For me the words of our next hymn also describe what our faith can mean to us....

**HYMN: O love divine**

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment*

1 O love divine, how sweet thou art!  
When shall I find my longing heart  
all taken up by thee?  
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove  
the greatness of redeeming love,  
the love of Christ to me.

2 Stronger his love than death or hell;  
its riches are unsearchable:  
the first-born sons of light  
desire in vain its depth to see;  
they cannot reach the mystery,  
the length and breadth and height.

3 God only knows the love of God;  
O that it now were shed abroad  
in this poor stony heart!  
For love I sigh, for love I pine;  
this only portion, Lord, be mine,  
be mine this better part.

*Charles Wesley*

## SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 8: 28-39

<sup>28</sup> We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> Those whom God had already chosen he also set apart to become like his Son, so that the Son would be the first among many believers.

<sup>30</sup> And so those whom God set apart, he called; and those he called, he put right with himself, and he shared his glory with them.

<sup>31</sup> In view of all this, what can we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> Certainly not God, who did not even keep back his own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will accuse God's chosen people? God himself declares them not guilty! <sup>34</sup> Who, then, will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right side of God, pleading with him for us! <sup>35</sup> Who, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution or hunger or poverty or danger or death? <sup>36</sup> As the scripture says,

“For your sake we are in danger of death at all times;  
we are treated like sheep that are going to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us!

<sup>38</sup> For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, <sup>39</sup> neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God, which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.

## REFLECTION II

Just in case I have made this journey of faith sound all too easy, Paul as usual reminds us of the reality of our situation: the struggle we may face as we seek to live our lives by the Spirit of God within us, the suffering shared by God's children. “All creation groans with pain” he writes, and sometimes when we look at world events today we may feel he has a point!

Because of the events and situations that concern us today, not least the Coronavirus pandemic that has brought so many changes in our lives, we may well become anxious and find faith difficult. Do all things really work together for good with those who love God?

The Greek word here implies that God “intermingles” with our lives, working together with us to bring good out of evil. It is a lovely picture of God weaving a pattern out of our lives and using us as co-workers with Him in building up His kingdom.

One of my favourite passages from Paul's writings comes in the final verse of this chapter. Here we discover the true value of the pearl of great price, as Paul reminds us of the blessing of a love that never fails us or leaves us. He writes “There is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God, which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Let us pray*

Loving God, we are reminded that You have called us to fulfil Your purposes. We pray that You will work in us, and through us, to do Your will. Help us to become the people You want us to be and guide us in Your ways.

As we grow in our faith, we pray today for all who find faith difficult, for those who have lost a faith they once possessed. We pray for all who are still searching and for all who do not pray for themselves.

We remember especially today all who struggle for survival; the poor and the oppressed, the hungry and homeless, and all who feel powerless. We pray for all who suffer; for those who are ill, for all who mourn, for the dying and the bereaved.

We pray for our families and all whom we love; for our church family, especially those who are anxious or lonely.

Gracious God, hold in Your love and care all who are in need this day.

We pray for all who have gone before us to prepare a place for us. Lead us until we come fully into Your kingdom and walk before You in the life which is eternal.

We ask these prayers, together with the unspoken prayers of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN: Through all the changing scenes of life

*If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*J Tate & N Brady*

A GAELIC BLESSING

May the road rise to meet you,  
may the wind be always at your back,  
may the sun shine warm upon your face  
and the rain fall soft upon your fields;  
and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

**Amen**

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