



Service for the 5th Sunday after Trinity, 12th July 2020

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

We all love a good story: we can't wait to hear how it ends.
Come and worship the Lord God, author of our stories,
each one so different, but if properly rooted in God, they can be amazing.
Come and hear God's story for us today,
and make it part of your story.

Amen.

HYMN: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

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

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives your service find,
in deeper reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up and follow thee,
rise up and follow thee.

3 O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
when Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love!
interpreted by love!

4 With that deep hush subduing all
our words, and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let your blessing fall
as fell your manna down,
as fell your manna down.

5 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace,
the beauty of thy peace.

6 Breathe through the heats of our desire
your coolness and your balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!
O still, small voice of calm!

J G Whittier

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Let us pray.

Lord, we might not be sitting by a lake today; however, as the crowds eagerly gathered to listen to the stories and truths you told them, we too await your word to us.

With joy in our hearts and anticipation, we pray that you will give us listening ears and hearts open to receive your love, your teaching, and your wisdom.

Amen.

For the times we dash haphazardly into your presence, finding it hard to leave behind our cares and worries:

forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times we don't learn from our experiences:

forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times we don't take care of ourselves, or the people we share our lives with:

forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times we don't see what you want us to see and just take things at face value:

forgive us, good Lord, and make us new. Amen.

Gracious God, we thank you that all good gifts come from you. We thank you for all you have given us. As the good soil welcomes the seed, and causes it to grow, we welcome you to take root and flourish in our lives.

Amen.

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: Isaiah 55: 10-13

"My word is like the snow and the rain
that come down from the sky to water the earth.

They make the crops grow
and provide seed for planting and food to eat.

¹¹ So also will be the word that I speak—
it will not fail to do what I plan for it;
it will do everything I send it to do.

¹² "You will leave Babylon with joy;
you will be led out of the city in peace.

The mountains and hills will burst into singing,
and the trees will shout for joy.

¹³ Cypress trees will grow where now there are briars;
myrtle trees will come up in place of thorns.

This will be a sign that will last forever,
a reminder of what I, the LORD, have done."

COMMENT I

As many parents have had to home-school their children, at the same time as working full time themselves from home, I have lots of sympathy with them. Most of us can, however, recognise how wonderful it is to help our children learn to read. Books are colourful and the characters are so well illustrated, but there is also plenty to keep your imagination alight. I love Julia Donaldson's "Stick Man" and "The Snail and the Whale"

The sea snail slithered all over the rock
And gazed at the sea and the ships in the dock.
And as she gazed she sniffed and sighed,
"The sea is deep and the world is wide!
How I long to sail"
Said the tiny snail.

The language is picture language. The reason that so many children and others have shared time with these books is that they paint a vivid picture of God's creation.

Similarly, the passage from Isaiah uses picture language of rain and snow watering the earth and producing growth as an illustration of how God's Word always achieves whatever God intends. They also reflect on our responsibilities towards God's creation. God's will is good and gracious. Isaiah proclaimed that when God's Word goes forth and accomplishes God's purpose, the result is not wailing and gnashing of teeth but rather joy and song. When God's will is done, God's people "shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace." The whole creation cries, "Glory be to God on high". When God's will is done, "the mountains and hills shall break forth in singing", and "the trees of the field shall clap their hands". People, animals, trees and mountains will experience the goodness of the Lord, the glory of the Lord.

In the meantime, we are contending with Covid-19: the prospect that many people will have to wait for life-saving treatment as hospital waiting lists lengthen, people have been made redundant, education is not available to many, many are unable to see loved ones and there are disappointments galore. We remind ourselves again and again of God's promise: "We know that, in everything, God works for good with those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose". We tell ourselves that God's will is good and gracious. We are able to recognise the beauty of God's creation. We are also aware that we are not charmed as we go through this earthly existence, but we are grateful that God is there to hold our hand at all times.

HYMN: Tell me the stories of Jesus

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

1. Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear,
Things I would ask him to tell me if he were here.
Scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea,
Stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

2. First, let me hear how the children stood round his knee.
That I may know of His blessings resting on me;
Words full of kindness, deeds full of grace,
Signs of the love found in Jesus' face.

3. Tell me, in words full of wonder, how rolled the sea,
Tossing the boat in a tempest on Galilee!
Then, Jesus doing His Father's will,
ended the storm with "Peace, peace, be still".

4. Into the city I'd follow the children's band,
waving a branch of the palm-tree high in my hand;
One of His heralds, yes, I would sing
loudest hosannas, "Jesus is King!"

William H Parker (*altd*)

SCRIPTURE READING: St Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

13 That same day Jesus left the house and went to the lakeside, where he sat down to teach. ²The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it, while the crowd stood on the shore. ³He used parables to tell them many things.

"Once there was a man who went out to sow grain. ⁴As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some of it fell on rocky ground, where there was little soil. The seeds soon sprouted, because the soil wasn't deep. ⁶But when the sun came up, it burned the young plants; and because the roots had not grown deep enough, the plants soon dried up. ⁷Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸But some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain: some had one hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty."

⁹And Jesus concluded, "Listen, then, if you have ears!"

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

¹⁸"Listen, then, and learn what the parable of the sower means. ¹⁹Those who hear the message about the Kingdom but do not understand it are like the seeds that fell along the path. The Evil One comes and snatches away what was sown in them. ²⁰The seeds that fell on rocky ground stand for those who receive the message gladly as soon as they hear it. ²¹But it does not sink deep into them, and they don't last long. So when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, they give up at once. ²²The seeds that fell among thorn bushes stand for those who hear the message; but the worries about this life and the love for riches choke the message, and they don't bear fruit. ²³And the seeds sown in the good soil stand for those who hear the message and understand it: they bear fruit, some as much as one hundred, others sixty, and others thirty."

COMMENT II

Matthew's Gospel consists of a set of parables that communicate aspects of the kingdom of God. Jesus taught by using these short narratives to illustrate a point. Sometimes the narrative is explicitly identified as pictures to help us understand the meaning. The reading today presents such a picture. Jesus' audience could picture someone sowing seed, probably by throwing it across each side of the ground as they walked along a path of beaten earth through a field. Within the story, Jesus explains why the seed falling in four different places might be more or less productive.

In the second half of the reading, Jesus calls on the crowd to listen. The different growing situations are metaphors for different responses to the word of the kingdom. As such, they help explain why Jesus' message is not received with acclaim by all of Israel. Various factors affected how the same 'seed' of God's word fared in different circumstances in Jesus' time: distraction by forces against God, by hostility from others, by worries of life and concern for wealth.

The parable helps us to understand why people outside the Church today respond in different ways to the Church. It may reflect how Christians feel they respond to the ongoing call of God in their lives. The parable can speak to us in various situations in differing ways – but all may be fruitful.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray.

Merciful Lord, we ask that the love and caring shown during this difficult time follows us out of the darkness of the pandemic and into the light of health. Help us to take with us those small acts of kindness and wish for the common good, to create a fairer and more considerate society in our own community and the wider world.

Help us to be mindful of the dreadful weariness resulting from the long hours of work of those still able to do so in our hospitals, care homes and other 'key workers'. Lord, in Your mercy, comfort those who suffer in body or spirit and let them feel the warmth and peace of Your Love.

Lord, be with those who face redundancy and unemployment and are worried about the future. Lord, please be with those who are in positions where they can make a difference to the lives of others.

We look forward with joy to the re-opening of our church. Even though the pandemic dictates that things will be different, we give You thanks that soon we may once again enter Your house with praise and for comfort. We hope that those who are able to return may do so in increased numbers, bringing with them the people who have re-kindled or found faith during this time of difficulty.

Amen.

HYMN: The church's one foundation

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

1 The church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the Word:
from heav'n he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

2 Elect from ev'ry nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with ev'ry grace endued.

3 'Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace forevermore;
till with the vision glorious
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious
shall be the church at rest.

4 Yet she on earth hath union
with the God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with thee.

Samuel J Stone

BLESSING

May the Lord lighten your burden, not because of your own strength but because of His.
When we grow weary, may He lead us back to His presence and help us to know He doesn't
give trials we cannot face as He is always with us.
When we're desperate for God, He is our help and our comfort, our strength when we fall
down.

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and all those you
love and pray for, now and always.

Amen