

Sunday Worship at Home

Sunday 24th May 2020

Making More Disciples – the Kingdom of Heaven is like....

Preparation

Take a moment to sit and be still. Light a candle in remembrance of the light of dawn of that first Easter Sunday, a day where sorrow turned to joy, a day of wonder, a day of grace. Breathe slowly and deeply. Allow God's presence to be felt as you bring yourself closer to him. Remember all those who will be worshipping and praying in their own homes and know that we are together in fellowship and spirit.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, I thank you that though we cannot meet together as a fellowship, I know that even when we are apart, we are always together as part of the world-wide community of faith, with you at the very centre. Help me to remember that you are my refuge and my strength, and my ever-present help in these troubled times. I praise you for your goodness and mercy, and I thank you for this time where I remember you are with me. Amen.

Hymn: Amazing Grace(my chains are gone)

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

John Newton (1725–1807), John P. Rees (1828–1900), Edwin O. Excell (1851–1921) Arr. & add. chorus:
Chris Tomlin & Louie Giglio Copyright © 2006 worshiptogether.com songs/sixsteps
Music/kingswaysongs.com

**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.**

**'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!**

*My chains are gone,
I've been set free,
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood His mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace.*

**The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.**

**The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine.
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.**

Prayer for the Day

God of grace, merciful and compassionate,
we celebrate that you have made us right
with you through the death and resurrection
of your Son, Jesus.
God of joy, our hope in bad times and good,
We thank you that your mercies are new
every morning, for great is your faithfulness
to us.
God of love, passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
**watch over us and hold us all the days of
our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Saying Sorry

In a moment of quiet, hold up to God the thoughts, words and actions that you need ask forgiveness for.

**Heavenly Father, we come to you to ask
forgiveness for all our wrong words and
actions this past week. For we know that
when we confess our sins, You are faithful
and just and will forgive us our sins and
make us clean again. Thank you for your
great love, grace and mercy for each one of
us. Amen.**

Readings

Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 13 vs 31, 32 and 44

³¹ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Short Reflection by Mark Taylor

According to a news report from November last year, Swindon and Wiltshire are among the best places in the United Kingdom for finding buried treasure with 44 reported discoveries in 2018. If you find anything that you believe is a treasure, such as coins or metal objects, and if these turn out to be over 300 years old, then according to the "Treasure Act" (who knew!) this has to be reported to the coroner within 2 weeks; there has to be an inquest; and if what has been found turns out to have value, then the finder gets a proportion of the value.

However, I am not about to start digging in our back garden, as I have no wish to face the wrath of Sarah if I ruin the carefully tended flower beds that she has lovingly nurtured and which are currently looking so beautiful in the spring sunshine. But I must admit, there is something exciting about the idea of finding something very valuable long since hidden away and lost.

The parable Jesus told his disciples about the hidden treasure is the shortest parable in the bible, one whole verse. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." Jesus told this story to them as part of several parables about the kingdom of heaven, which can also be understood as the kingdom of God. His disciples would have been familiar with the idea of burying valuable items. There were no banks during the time of Christ, although there were "bankers" who were money changers and did investments, so it would have been common practice to hide larger sums of

money or treasure in the ground. In fact some of the treasure hordes that have been found were treasure that was buried for safe keeping hundreds of years ago and never retrieved.

The meaning of the parable is simple and direct, and here are three words to think about:

Priceless. Joy. Sacrifice.

First, we see how valuable the kingdom is. The kingdom of heaven should be of such value to us that we are prepared to lose everything we have in order to gain it. What is the kingdom of heaven? Well, this would be spiritual rule and authority of the sovereign Lord God over all of his creation, and the salvation that is available to us through repentance of our wrongdoing and in trusting in the saving grace that is ours through Jesus Christ. It is the gospel, the good news, and it is something we should treasure and value above all other things. It is, in fact, priceless to us. To have it brings us the promise of eternal life and being rescued from sure destruction after we die. Do we treasure the gospel as beyond price?

Secondly, the man goes "in his joy" to sell all he had. He did what he did with joy! He prized that treasure so much that nothing he already had could compare to it, and nothing he already had meant enough to him to keep hold of it. No, he wanted that treasure beyond anything else, and in gaining it he was full of joy. Do we treasure the good news about the kingdom of God, and the saving grace and boundless love that our saviour Jesus Christ has for us? Jesus says in Matthew 6:21 ~where your treasure is, there your heart will also be". Are our hearts in the right place, to have joy in the treasure of the gospel?

Thirdly, the man "sold all he had and bought that field". Whatever he already had, whatever he had already gained, it was worthless to him, and he was willing to sacrifice it all for that treasure. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians, "Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." (3 vs 7-8) The man in Jesus' parable sold all he had to gain the treasure, but remember, he did it with joy! The apostle Paul

was willing to give up all he had in order to gain the treasure that is in Jesus and his good news. Are we willing to do the same?

It is important to note that the kingdom of God is a free offering. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom", Luke 12 vs 32. It is a gift! No money required, the treasure can be yours. But there is something else about treasure. And this is where we very briefly think about the mustard seed. This parable is Jesus telling his disciples about how from a very small and insignificant start the Christian faith and church would grow and grow, growing outwards from Jerusalem to all the world. But that would only happen if the treasure that is the good news is spread far and wide. We are not to keep the treasure we have found a secret. Like the "Treasure Act" when we find the treasure we need to report it! We are not to hoard it and keep it to ourselves. Hoarded treasure just gets dirty and corroded and no-one can see its true value. It is a treasure to be shared with everyone, so that our joy in the good news is increased in the sharing. A party is no fun on your own! We need to be people who invite others to the party and share with them the treasure that is the good news about Jesus. Amen!

Intercessory Prayer

You could use either the Five Finger Method or the Finger Labyrinth (both produced as a page at the end of this service) or follow a preferred model of prayer for yourself.

Lord's Prayer

**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.**

A Prayer for this time we live in:

**We are not people of fear: we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety:
we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.
We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity.
We are your people God, giving and loving,
wherever we are, whatever it costs
For as long as it takes wherever you call us.**

A closing blessing prayer from the Iona Community:

Go now before us, Risen Christ,
Into the world of your loving,
The world of your living and dying, and there,
help us to bear witness to your Risen Life.
Christ be with us, Christ within us, Christ behind us, Christ before us,
Christ to win us, Christ to comfort and restore us,
Christ beneath us, Christ above us,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in the hearts of all who love us,
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger.
And the blessing of God,
Creator, Son and Spirit,
be with you, and among you, and go with you where you go (or stay),
now and always,
Amen.

Suggestions for Prayer today & during the week

Lectio Divina

Using the Bible Reading from today's service, we can use the ancient way of praying called Lectio Divina (which means divine reading). It is a simple way of slowing down enough to really hear God. The following instructions are just one way of praying using this method.



1. Be quiet for a few seconds, take a couple of deep breaths. Decide to focus on God for the next few minutes, perhaps close your eyes.
 2. Read today's Bible passage to yourself – either aloud or silently.
 3. Read it again, slowly.
 4. Start listening out for a word or phrase that jumps out to you, something that grabs your attention.
 5. Read it one more time, this time decide on one word or phrase.
 6. Think about the word/phrase you chose. What does it make you think of? What pictures pop into your head? What does it make you feel?
 7. Turn the word into some kind of prayer – does it make you want to say thank you, please, sorry or something else? Say your prayer to God.
 8. Just sit quietly for another few seconds.
- (taken from engageworship.org)

Prayer Jars

It can be difficult at times to decide on what to pray for. Having something like a prayer jar may help.



You could put slips of paper into the jar over the course of a week, prayers for people or situations, prayers of thanks for answered prayers etc.

During the time of prayer today (and/or during the week), you could take them out (or a few) and spend time focusing on them, offering them up to God's love, mercy and care.

Prayer Stones

The idea for using prayer stones is that they can represent people or situations.



As we are now in the Holy Habit of Making More Disciples, it may be that there is a person in particular who you are praying for to come to know and follow Christ for themselves. Think of people you know and love. Think of people you know about through the news. Is there anyone you can think of whose lives could be transformed by knowing the overwhelming love and grace of God?

Pray for them. Pray for them every day. Pray that they might come to know God's love for themselves. Pray that they might become a disciple of Jesus.

Choose stones, buttons or something colourful that can be kept somewhere as a prayer focus. When you look at the object, remember who or what it represents and offer a prayer to God.

For Children

Make a prayer rainbow using any materials you have at home or have a rainbow hunt and find objects of each colour.

Use your rainbow to pray for...

everyone who is sick
carers and delivery drivers
all those who are special to us
teachers and leaders
everyone working for the NHS
people who are feeling scared or sad
yourself



The Rainbow is a sign of hope, a sign of God's promise. Pray that in this difficult time all people may come to know the love and peace of God.