

Trinity 7 - 26 July 2020

Order of service

Introduction

Hello, and welcome to our Benefice service here in Rural East York.

My name is Mark Poole, and I am the curate of the four parishes here of Dunnington, Warthill, Holtby and Stockton-on-the-Forest.

Wherever you are and whenever you have tuned in, it's great that you've joined us, and you are most welcome.

As we prepare for worship now, let's just take a moment to still our minds and hearts and recentre them on the presence and love of God.

So let us pray.

From the corners of the world,
from the confusion of life,
from the loneliness of our hearts:
gather us O God.
To feed our minds,
to fire our imagination,
to free our hearts:
gather us, O God.

Loving God, may the seed of your word take root in our minds
that we might know the treasures of your kingdom,
may the yeast of your love be worked through our hearts,
so that we might share the good news of your kingdom
and of your unconditional love for all.
Amen.

And our Collect for today.

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things,
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy, keep us in the same,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen

Hymn

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
all your purposes, for your glory.

Teach us Lord full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise. Cause our eyes to see,
your majestic love and authority.
Love and hope that can never fail;
Shining through the dark of our unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Love unchanged from the dawn of time,
and creation's light through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises;
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, 'til your kingdom come
and the earth is filled with your glory.

Gospel reading

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He 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.'

'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.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

'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.'

Homily

I am Judith Hewitt a Reader in this benefice of four churches, where I regularly take services of the word and funerals. I have been asked to share some thoughts on today's Gospel reading with you.

During these last weeks, many of us have spent time in our gardens, and they may now be looking the best they have for a long time. With flowerbeds in full bloom and vegetable plots now offering produce for us to eat and enjoy.

We may have walked around our communities to discover what our neighbours are growing in their gardens and thinking I could try to grow those next year.

I, like many of us, wasn't prepared before lockdown so I had to ask my sister, who lives in Wells, for some help. She kindly sent me some pea and broad bean seeds to plant, and they are now almost ready to harvest.

When we look around our gardens, we can see the rich colours of the flowers, along with a variety of shapes and scents and that's before we taste those things we can. Where do they all begin, we ask?

Jesus in today's Bible reading is 'sowing seeds', as he does in many of his parables. His seeds are seeds of

wisdom and encouragement, seeds of knowledge and confidence, which he plants in the hearts and minds of his listeners.

Jesus always tried to use familiar activities to illustrate his teachings, and for those listening today, many would be everyday situations. At first we might think they are just a jumble of ideas, but let us slow down and think about each one.

We first hear about a man planting a mustard seed, the smallest seed possible but it can grow into a strong bush, about three metres in height, providing shelter for the birds of the air: showing that something small can become something great and useful.

It would be unusual to plant one seed, but the seed here, which appears very insignificant, is like the kingdom of heaven being planted in the world. As we grow in our faith and share it with others so the kingdom will grow and we will become stronger because of it.

If you make bread you will know the effect of a small amount of yeast, with other ingredients, on the flour, making a loaf that is light enough to eat. Here again the kingdom of heaven is small, but just as yeast grows, and often rapidly, it changes the lives of people who will in turn change the lives of those around them, although this maybe slowly.

In Jesus' time, there were often no places to put valuables safely, so the owner might hide them or bury them in the earth. The owner might then go away and not return for his valuables. It could be that someone then discovers something valuable in a field and thinking there may be other treasures there, decides to sell all they have to buy the field in the hope of finding more treasure.

We can see here the kingdom is like something of value that is a joy to find, but is actually worth more than

all of our possessions.

Merchants are always on the lookout for that special item, here it is a pearl, that might make their fortune, and which they will sell everything to get. Are we like the merchant, will we give up everything to be part of the kingdom of heaven?

Finally Jesus speaks of the fishermen with their harvest of fish of every kind. They have worked hard to bring their nets, which are full of fish to the shore. The net is like the kingdom of heaven, full of all kinds of people all with different gifts, talents and characteristics.

Before each of these parables Jesus uses the words 'the kingdom of heaven is like'. The 'seeds' Jesus is sowing in these parables are telling us more about the kingdom of heaven. Do we know what the kingdom of heaven is like now? How would you describe it? I would suggest, to start with, it is full of challenges and joys. The kingdom is of great value and is worth searching for. The value of the kingdom lies in God's power to transform each and every one of us, knowing that this may not be a comfortable experience, but God will be with us throughout.

We have all been, and continue to go through challenging times. You may have found these services each week by chance, perhaps searching for something to listen to, to be part of, perhaps it is a link with your past, or you are a member of our Church family. Perhaps one of the seeds you have heard about today means more to you than the others, nurture it so that it will become something special within you.

We may have seen glimpses of the kingdom of heaven in those who have supported us through these last weeks, the person who has phoned to have a chat, or the person who has been shopping for us. I am sure you could think of other people who have been there when you needed them.

The kingdom of heaven is there in the little things around us but also with all its challenges, offering something beyond price, something that cannot be bought, something we have to respond to.

I wonder who first sowed a seed of faith in you. Did our faith come through something our family and friends shared with us and then became rooted in us? However we received it, and however small and fragile it may sometimes seem, it has brought us into the kingdom of heaven. So let's nurture this faith in us, and above all, let us continue to sow and to share the kingdom of heaven seeds, with all around us, and so help God's kingdom to flourish and grow.

Amen

New Testament

Romans 8:26-39

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 those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

God's Love in Christ Jesus

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us

from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 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.

Intercessions

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.

We offer our prayers, thoughts and words, with our understanding incomplete, our vision clouded by the chaos and confusion of the world. We approach God, with hearts and minds busy, distracted, pained. We call out to God, and we do not know how to pray as we ought.

In anguish, in anger, in despair; we search for God. For ourselves, for our loved ones, for the world; against injustice, inequality, unfairness; we cry to God.

Holy Spirit, clear and calm our thoughts. Grant us peace, and patience and strength, that we may know the love of God, dwelling within us. That love that neither death, nor life, nor anything else can break.

We pray for the world; for places where the rule of law is absent or fracturing; for societies which are divided; for people who are excluded and exiled. Where there is corruption, self-interest, oppression, Lord, may the seeds of your kingdom be planted.

We pray for those who are suffering, in body, mind or spirit; we pray for all who care for them, at home, in hospital, in care homes, and in the community. We pray for all who mourn, that they may be comforted.

In our words, in our silence, in our stillness, may we know that love which is the heart of the kingdom.

That love which brings joy, and happiness and thanksgiving.

That love which gives us strength to show compassion and kindness.

That love which is light and goodness, casting out darkness, bringing healing and life.

That love which welcomes all, accepts all as we journey together.

That love which binds us to God, and one another, as we seek to build the kingdom of righteousness and peace.

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.

Hymn

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Snared by pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray their trust;
what with care and toil they buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Blessing

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to today's service, and thank you to all those who have shared it with others enabling them to watch it or to listen to it.

We do welcome your feedback, so please do get in touch (email address).

And now we come to our blessing.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with us wherever he may send us.

May he guide us through the wilderness and protect us through the storm,

and may he bring us home rejoicing at the wonders he has shown us,

may he bring us home rejoicing once again through our doors.

in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen