**Transcript June 13th 2021 - Trinity 2**

**Welcome**

Welcome to our service for Sunday 13th June, brought to you by the Benefice of Rural East York. My name is Nick Bird, and we hope that, wherever you are joining us from, you are keeping well.

Today we explore the kingdom of God, that mysterious phrase so beloved by Jesus, and how he tries to explain it to his followers, and to us. And so we invite you to worship.

**Let us pray:**

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails: deepen our faithfulness to you and to your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Hymn: Praise, my soul, the King of heaven**

1. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;

To His feet thy tribute bring.

Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,

Who like me His praise should sing?

Praise Him, praise Him,

praise Him, praise Him,

Praise the everlasting King.

1. Praise Him for His grace and favor

To our fathers in distress.

Praise Him still the same forever,

Slow to chide, and swift to bless.

Praise Him, praise Him,

 praise Him, praise Him,

Glorious in His faithfulness.

1. Fatherlike He tends and spares us;

Well our feeble frame He Knows.

In His hands He gently bears us,

Rescues us from all our foes.

Praise Him, praise Him,

praise Him, praise Him,

Widely as His mercy goes.

1. Angels help us to adore Him;

Ye behold Him face to face;

Sun and moon, bow down before Him,

Dwellers all in time and space.

Praise Him, praise Him,

praise Him, praise Him,

Praise with us the God of grace.

**Confession & Absolution**

Jesus says, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.’

So let us turn away from sin and turn to the Lord,

confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,**

**we have sinned against you,**

**through our own fault,**

**in thought, and word, and deed,**

**and in what we have left undone.**

**We are heartily sorry,**

**and repent of all our sins.**

**For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake,**

**forgive us all that is past;**

**and grant that we may serve you in newness of life**

**to the glory of your name.**

**Amen.**

Almighty God,

who in Jesus Christ has given us

a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,

forgive *us our* sins,

open *our* eyes to God’s truth,

strengthen *us* to do God’s will

and give *us* the joy of his kingdom,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**.

**Gospel reading: Mark 4:26-34**

26 He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. Aman scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

**30** Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? **31** It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. **32** Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

**33** With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. **34** He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

**Song: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God**

1. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

And His righteousness

And all these things shall be added unto you

Allelu Alleluia

*Alleluia Alleluia*

*Alleluia Allelu Alleluia*

1. You shall not live by bread alone,

But by every word

That proceeds from the mouth of God.

Allelu Alleluia

*Alleluia Alleluia*

*Alleluia Allelu Alleluia*

1. Ask and it shall be given unto you

Seek and ye shall find

Knock and it shall be opened unto you

Allelu Alleluia

*Alleluia Alleluia*

*Alleluia Allelu Alleluia*

**Homily**

The kingdom of heaven is like a knight on a white charger....The kingdom of heaven is like a giant stone fortress...The kingdom of heaven is like a tall mountain...

On many occasions Jesus offers a parable, an analogy, to try and help his followers understand the indescribable. Describing the indescribable, as you can imagine, it pretty difficult. And the concept of the 'kingdom of heaven' is a tough one. There is no formula for it, no graph or diagram. And so Jesus employs various metaphors into which our imaginations can swim.

The kingdom of heaven is like a banquet. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure. The kingdom of heaven is within you.The kingdom of heaven is like a farmer, a pearl, a child, a net, like yeast, like a seed.

Frequently small or unexpected, and often surprising to Jesus' original listeners, but dulled to us by their familiarity, maybe.

Perhaps, back in the days of occupied Palestine, with the inconvenient Romans, the people wanted to hear this Jewish rabbi describe the kingdom of God in powerful and victorious ways – the warrior, the castle, the mountain. But to describe this long-for kingdom as a mustard seed must have sounded blasphemous in the ears of Jesus' listeners.

The mustard seed is famously small. It's also a pain to farmers – it gets in the cracks and can behave like an invasive weed. The plant is inconvenient and can take over a field.

But the analogy of the seed in its sequence of growth is like the Kingdom of God in this sense: it grows mysteriously of its own accord and appears on God’s timetable (not yours or mine). God’s divine reign is not controlled by us – it is organic, often unseen, and can be wild.

Jesus uses the parable of the mustard seed to help illustrate something else about God's kingdom. It grows until 'the birds of the air make nests in its branches'. The kingdom provides shelter, creates a home and a community. More than that, according to Jewish law, some birds are clean and some are unclean. Jesus doesn't differentiate here, and all gather together.

We are wise to never neglect or despise the small, the uncontrolled, the wildness of God's actions, and wise to not overlook the possible and the potential. That the kingdom of heaven (small, mysterious, hospitable and inconvenient) is like a mustard seed gives me hope that all things are possible in the economy of God's grace.

**Intercessions**

 **Let us pray**

Loving god, you tell us that faith as small as a grain of mustard seed is enough. Remind us , now, that prayers , small and feeble though we may believe them to be will always be enough, if they are offered in humility and thanksgiving.

And so Father God, we approach your throne of grace with our concerns, our burdens and our thanksgiving for all your people throughout the world.

We pray for the Christian church and it’s leaders, especially for churches in places where religious faith is suppressed or where Christianity is an unwelcome minority.

We give thanks for Nick, Terry, Mark , Judith and all the people who use their gifts to further your mission in this benefice. We thank you for the people in our benefice and for the love that is shared between us.

**Lord in your mercy**

**Hear our prayer**

O Lord God, nothing is impossible for you,

Through the media, we witness many acts of violence and injustice in so many parts of the world. The sadness and pain threaten to overwhelm us.

We pray for peace Lord. We pray for the innocent victims caught up in these conflicts.

Bless world and community leaders, those in public office. Grant them discernment when making decisions on behalf of their people. Give them hearts full of compassion and a desire for equality and justice.

**Lord in your mercy**

**Hear our prayer**

Gracious God, we continue to pray for our children and young people as they cope with the many disruptions caused by the pandemic. Be near to those who are beginning important exams at school and university. We pray for the ones hoping to start new chapters in their lives in the world of work.

Help us all to build a society where both young and old, gifted and less able feel valued and loved.

**Lord in your mercy**

**Hear our prayer**

God of compassion, we think now of those in particular need, both within our communities and further afield; the elderly, the housebound, those in care homes, in hospital and hospice.

We remember the victims of violence, abuse or cruelty. We give thanks for all those who care for them. In the quiet of our hearts we name any known to us, and we release them into your hands.

**Lord in your mercy**

**Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who face the pain of grief at the loss of a loved one. Help us to support all who mourn, both by our prayers and with practical acts.

We remember before God those who have recently died and those whose anniversaries fall at this time. Grant them rest eternal.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray for ourselves. We pray for eyes to see the possible.

Lead us into this coming week and , when we feel small, fearful and uncertain, strengthen our faith. Where the world has worn us down, we ask you to restore us and where we have looked to our own strength rather than yours, we ask for your Holy Spirit to renew us.

Keep us from making mistakes, take us and use us for your purposes. Lord we surrender ourselves into your hands.

**Lord in your mercies**

**Hear our prayer**

Like the mustard seed which grows into a tree in which birds can find shelter and rest, help us to acknowledge our own faith, no matter how small and fragile. Lord, you can make our small larger and more beautiful than we could ever imagine.

Help us to see that within a small seed of faith, there lies all the power of God.

God of small things, we marvel that you should care for the smallest of sparrows and the tiniest of seeds, while we attend to the loud and lofty. Forgive us Lord, teach us to look with tenderness on all your creatures, for you love us all, though we are small.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Let us draw all our prayers together by saying the prayer Jesus taught us

**Our Father who art in heaven,**

**Hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come,**

**Thy will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**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**

**Song - Sing of the Lord’s goodness**

1. Sing of the Lord's goodness,

Father of all wisdom,

come to him and bless his name.

Mercy he has shown us,

his love is for ever,

faithful to the end of days.

*Come, then, all you nations,*

*sing of your Lord's goodness,*

*melodies of praise and thanks to God.*

*Ring out the Lord's glory,*

*praise him with your music,*

*worship him and bless his name.*

1. Power he has wielded, honour is his garment,

risen from the snares of death.

His word he has spoken,

one bread he has broken,

new life he now gives to all.

*Come, then, all you nations...*

1. Courage in our darkness,

comfort in our sorrow,

Spirit of our God most high;

solace for the weary,

pardon for the sinner,

splendour of the living God.

*Come, then, all you nations...*

1. Praise him with your singing,

praise him with the trumpet,

praise God with the lute and harp;

praise him with the cymbals,

praise him with your dancing,

praise God till the end of days.

*Come, then, all you nations...*

**Blessing**

We hope that you have enjoyed worship today, and been inspired by what has been shared. Please know that you are prayed for, and, as our churches continue to reopen, are welcome to our live services. Let us ask for God's blessing. May the reality of God's kingdom be revealed to you.May the potential of God's kingdom excite you.May the smallness of God's kingdom surprise you.May the joy of God's kingdom overwhelm you. And may the blessing of God Almighty,Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, and with those whom you love,today and always.