

Trinity 7 July 26th 2020

Opening Acclamation

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The holy One, is here;
Come bow before him now
With reverence and fear
In him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The holy One, is here.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place:
He comes to cleanse and heal,
To minister his grace -
No work too hard for him.
In faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place.

David Evans

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

Penitential Rite

God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ
to save us from our sins,
to be our advocate in heaven,
and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

**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.**

May almighty God have mercy on *us*,
forgive *us our* sins, and bring *us* to everlasting life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:**

receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect

Generous God,
you give us gifts and make them grow:
though our faith is small as mustard seed,
make it grow to your glory
and the flourishing of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Romans 8:26-39 New International Version (NIV)

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose. **29** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. **30** And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

More Than Conquerors

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not

spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. **34** Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? **36** As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” [b]

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [c] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39** neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Response:

**In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.**

Stuart Townend

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, Alleluia.

Your words are Spirit Lord and they are life

You have the words of eternal life. *Jn 6:63:68*

Alleluia

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Matthew 13:31-33 New International Version (NIV)

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

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."

33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough."

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

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.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. **46** When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net

47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. **48** When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. **49** This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous

50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51 “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

52 He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

This week’s Gospel focuses on five short parables about the Kingdom of God - which together have one main message - God’s Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven - and we need to be prepared!

First, the stories of the mustard seed and the yeast:

The mustard seed is a tiny seed that amazingly grows into a shrub (common in Galilee) **eventually** 10-foot-high and large enough to “house” the nests of birds.

Alongside this parable is the parable of the yeast. Yeast was a common and important ingredient in Palestinian households. Its character of gradual, initially unobservable, fermentation made it a particularly good metaphor . . . giving rise to a proverb of the time “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”.

These two parables suggest that the kingdom of God will have small and humble beginnings and they are parables about patience. Jesus’ followers, of course, (says Tom Wright) didn’t

want to wait. If the kingdom was really present where Jesus was, coming to birth in what he was doing, then they wanted the whole thing at once. They weren't interested in God's timetable.

Even if in its coming in Jesus, the kingdom had small beginnings - entrusted after his death to the Apostles - Still, it is destined to become the final glorious reality that we believe in and hope for. In our time - the Church remains people on the way, praying for the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven"

Then the next pair of parables: First comes the man who stumbles over treasure buried in a field, and sells all he owns to buy the land. (It seems to us definitely morally questionable that he covers the treasure and goes with joy to sell everything and buy the field. . . but the only point being made here is that the kingdom of God is worth everything.) Then similarly, the parable of the merchant who finally comes across the rare pearl he has been looking for, and also sells all his possessions to acquire it.

There is only one hoard of treasure; there is only one great pearl; and everything else is as nothing beside it. The treasure, or the pearl, is the gospel of the kingdom which Jesus was announcing and embodying.

We sing don't we: All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this
Knowing you, Jesus...
...there is no greater thing. (*Graham Kendrick*)

The kingdom is a reality that is worth everything.

The final parable tells us that understanding this and making a decision is important - urgent - because the world isn't simply going round and round in circles it's going in a straight line towards a goal, and it's going there quite fast. The choice is real, present, and stark

The fishing nets in the last parable had floats at the top and weights at the bottom and having been thrown out in the water, encircled the fish and was then dragged up on the shore. The net gathered fish "of every kind." Just as everyone "both bad and good" is invited into the Kingdom.

But It would also have been very common in Capernaum, for example, to see the fishermen sitting on the beach, going through the day's catch, keeping the good fish and throwing away the bad ones.

In the present time, people "bad and good" are allowed to live together but at the time of judgment a separation **will** take place - as in the parable of the wheat and the weeds, and the sheep and the goats...

Matthew never tires of warning of the reality of judgment

There's a decision to be made, and made urgently by each one of us. The gospel of the kingdom - is like a fabulous hoard of treasure, yours - if you'll sell everything else to buy the field where it's hidden. It's like the biggest, finest, purest pearl that any jeweller ever imagined, and it's yours - if you'll

sell everything else, including all the other pearls you've ever owned, in order to buy it.

The day will come when God will remake the whole world in justice and truth, and all who have shaped and formed themselves around injustice and lies will find that they are like the bad fish that the fishermen will be forced to throw away. The choice is real and stark.

But - when we hold that truth we must not let it distort our image of GOD into a God who is totting up all our sins and keeping account of our failings and inadequacies. Our God remains the God who plans to save us - to remove our sins from us as far as the East is from the West - and from whose love in Jesus nothing ; neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us. . THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN SEPARATE US from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8.39).

Response:

**Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.
Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.**

Timothy Dudley Smith

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
God almighty, by whose plan
earth and heaven sprang to being,
all created things began.**

**We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken,
like a lamb to slaughter led,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
he descended to the dead.**

**We believe in Jesus risen,
heaven's king to rule and reign,
to the Father's side ascended
till as judge he comes again.**

**We believe in God the Spirit;
in one Church, below, above:
saints of God in one communion,
one in holiness and love.**

**So by faith, our sins forgiven,
Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,
we shall rise with him in glory
to the life that knows no end.**

Prayers of intercession - Prepared and led by Keith Callard, Reader at St Mary's Church

Let us pray to the God who has drawn us here today from our scattered homes and communities via the internet and phone line recognising that he calls us to be Church together and because he is the God who loves us and who loves to receive our prayers.

Our loving Heavenly Father, we continue to pray for a world which is affected by the corona virus. We give thanks for those who have recovered and for those who have ministered to them in their recovery. Locally we pray for the staff of our local hospitals in Bedford, Stevenage and Luton. We pray too for the staff of our local Care Homes. We give thanks for all their care and commitment to their patients and clients over the past few months. We pray that they would have times of refreshment and rest over these summer months now that the peak has passed.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Our loving Heavenly Father, we pray especially for those areas of the world which are currently experiencing the terrifying daily rise in infections. We think of the people of Brazil, India, South Africa and Russia as well as those States in America which are witnessing increasing cases of this deadly virus. We pray for the victims of this terrible disease and for their families. We pray especially for the doctors, nurses and care workers in these areas of the

world. We pray that they might look to you for love, comfort and encouragement. May they find the strength to face the situation and the love and compassion to care for the sick, the dying and the bereaved.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father. We hear the good news of progress being made in the search for vaccines to protect us against COVID19. We give thanks for the work of scientists here in this country and others around the world who are investing all their time and energy into the development of an effective vaccine. May their efforts be crowned with success and let their reward be a world which can return to normality and people and communities live together in peace and safety.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, this week sees the start of a school summer holiday like no other in living memory. We give you thanks for the work which schools, their teachers and staff have put in over the last 4 months. We ask that you bless them in this holiday season, grant them rest and a recharging of their batteries. We pray too for the children starting their summer holiday. We pray especially for their safety over the next 6 weeks. We pray for those young people anxiously waiting for the results of courses which ended too soon and without the finality of examinations. May their grades reflect the work they had done and prepare them for their next steps in the world.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father We pray for farmers, especially those in this area as harvest time approaches. We pray for their good health and vibrant energy during the harvest season. We pray especially for the weather as they wait to bring in the harvest.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father We pray for those who are ill and in pain, and for those who are sad or frightened. Surround them with your love and comfort, and bring them healing. Lord in a moment of quiet we bring to you those who we know who are ill or suffering in any way...

Give them healing, restore them in body, mind and spirit. Father as the sick were brought to Jesus, so we bring you now all those we long to be healed. May they hear your voice and sense your touch.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray for those approaching death and for those who keep watch beside them. We thank you for the promise of mercy triumphing over judgement and we commend those at the end of their lives to your eternal and steadfast love and we ask that you bring comfort to those who mourn.

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

Let's pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**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 forever. Amen.**

Notices and Birthdays

The BLESSING and SENDING

**God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
may the gifts of your Spirit equip us
to serve and worship you
now and always. Amen.**

And the blessing.....

Go into the world
to walk in God's light,

to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory. **Amen.**

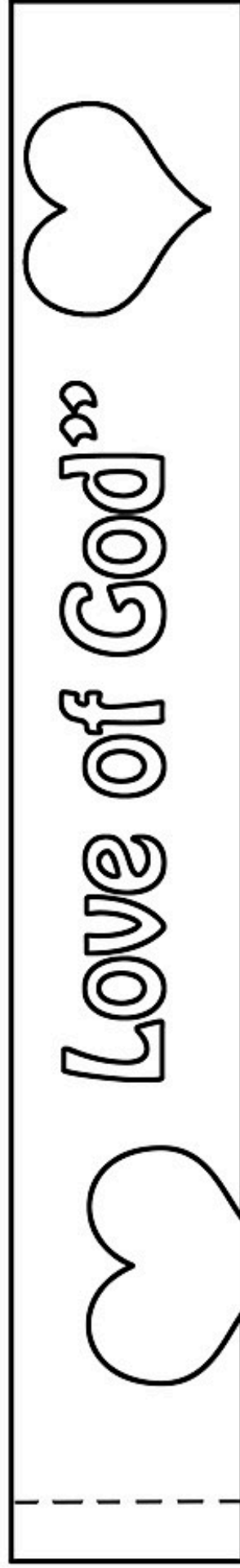
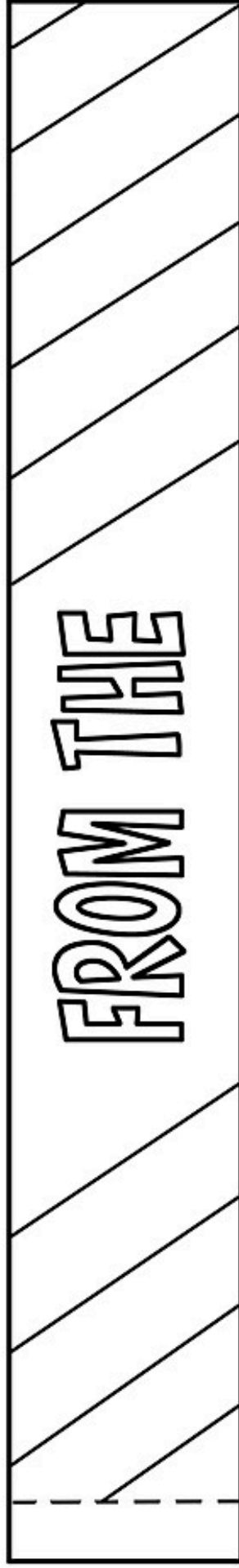
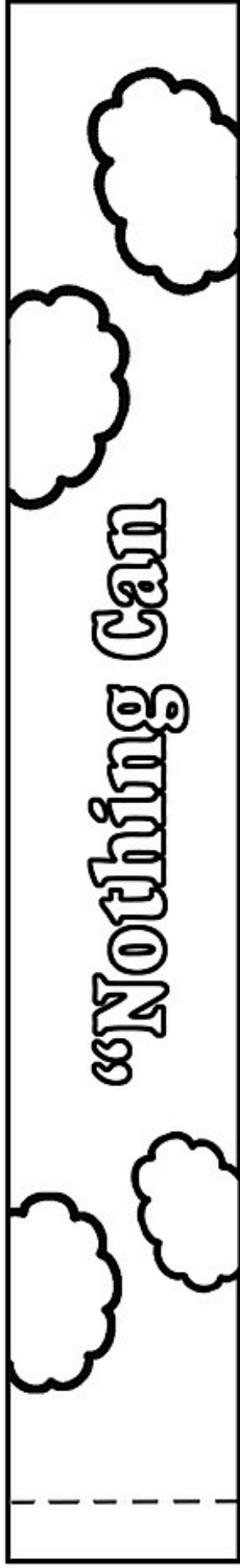
Final acclamation - Hymn of the day

**O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy Hand has made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed**

**And when I think that God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin**

**When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart
When I shall bow with humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art**
Karl Boburg

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Colour a few copies and make into a paper chain! **Romans 8:39**

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

"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." Matthew 13:44 (NIV)



The puzzle is based on Matthew 13:44 (NIV)

Find the hidden words. The words have been placed horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. When you locate a word, draw a circle around it.

Z T K I N G D O M X S R A X T
P J R Z U Q X H L P P N K M Z
N U A P L I F X Q O X T G B X
L X S A M F I Q N V T Z A Q P
U W P R A S E W G N R T K X R
P O W A Z V L T G N E O A W O
X D I B U Z D E N U A K V O B
A N E L W A H O E A S Z B W R
T O Z E G T C E A U U Z B D P
B O M O P W C M A H R T Z V Y
H O O F O U N D A V E S O L D
J J U N F I E L D N E Z V V O
V O G G Q H I D D E N N A K E
H A Y H H V U B Y K P I O A P
E W T C R T Y P S S K P B Y D

FOUND
HEAVEN
JOY

KINGDOM
SOLD
FIELD

PARABLE
MAN
TREASURE

BOUGHT
HIDDEN
FIELD