

SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH
AFTER PENTECOST 8 JULY 26, 2020
MORNING WORSHIP

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

CALL TO WORSHIP

God invites us to this place of worship.
***We are truly in God's presence,
whether we come with aching hearts
or singing God's praises.***
Let us worship God.
We do so with joy and gladness.

HYMN *TiS 819* (Supplement) ***Glory, glory in the highest!*** Tune 698

Glory, glory in the highest!
God we sing you joyful praise.
Peace on earth to all your people,
glad and grateful all our days.
Jesus, Lord and loving teacher
Lamb of God, you came to save.
Take away our sin, and show us
how to live the life you gave.

You, O Christ, are with the Father,
you will hear us when we call,
you have sent your Holy Spirit,
poured out blessing for us all.
So we lift our hearts to love you,
give ourselves to you for good.
All your friends and faithful servants
praise the everlasting God.

Elizabeth J. Smith

PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Holy God, we adore you.
We praise you for your mighty acts
of creation and salvation.
From age to age, you are God,
the one God, worshipped by Abraham,
Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel,
the one God we worship,
in good or difficult times.
Praise to you, God of grace.

Gracious God,
you made promises long ago,
offering your chosen people blessings.
We often doubt your works now,
amid the poverty, violence and racism of our day.
We often don't see the people who are hidden
from the daily circles of our lives.
We often don't understand that planting seeds of faith
point to your kingdom being found and shared.
Forgive us for failing to recognise you
and to live out our faith in love.
We pray in the name of Jesus, our Saviour. Amen

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Paul writes that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. God did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us. Hear then Christ's word of grace to us: 'Your sins are forgiven!'

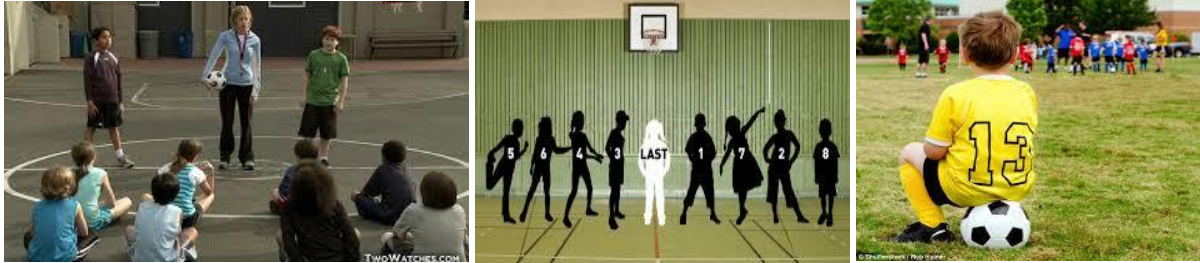
Doxology *TiS 390 v.6*

God has proclaimed his gracious gift:
new life for all, Alleluia.

*Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord
alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.*

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

AN EARLY WORD



Being chosen for a team? Being left out? Your team always losing? Here is good news: God chooses all of us! Everyone in God's team has already won! (*Romans 8. 26-39*)

THE READINGS

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet / ***a light to our path.***

Genesis 29. 15-28

Then Laban said to Jacob, 'Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?' Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, 'I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.' Laban said, 'It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.' So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.' So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?' Laban said, 'This is not done in our country – giving the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one and we will give you the other also in return for serving another seven years.' Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

Psalms Response Psalm 105. 1-11

Give thanks, acclaim God's name,
tell all the deeds that the Lord has done.
Make music and sing
the Lord's mighty wonders!

Revel in God's holy name,
delight in seeking the Lord.
Look always for the power,
for the presence of God.

Recount the signs and wonders,
the just decrees of God,
you heirs of Abraham and Jacob,
the chosen of the Lord.

The Lord is our God,
judge of all the earth,
who remembers his covenant
spoken to a thousand generations:

the agreement with Abraham,
the oath to Isaac,
the firm decree to Jacob,
the unending promise to Israel.
God said, 'I give you a land,
Canaan, your inheritance.'

(ICEL)

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 in 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.'

Lord, may your word live in us/ ***and bear much fruit to your glory.***

REFLECTION

More parables of the Kingdom! This is the third Sunday we've been exploring the Kingdom of God or Reign of God through parables in Matthew 13. Surely we know what the Kingdom, or Reign of God is! Something about where we go after we die? We know about being 'saved' now - and later going to heaven...

But that's actually not what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 13: he says the Kingdom is at hand; it has come near. In other words, the Reign of God on earth has begun! More surprisingly, God is at work in the world round us; is at work in us. The Kingdom of God is an experience of the creative, redemptive power of God.

This is quite straightforward, until we read today's parables of the Kingdom! They come at us sideways.

The Kingdom of heaven is like



a mustard seed that someone sowed in his field. The smallest of seeds, it grew into a great shrub so that the birds rested in its branches.

yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of meal until all of it was leavened.

treasure hidden in a field which someone found and hides, then in his joy goes and sells all he has and buys that field.

a merchant finding one pearl of great value, who goes and sells all he has to buy it.

a net thrown into the sea which caught fish of every kind, which were later sorted, the good kept and the bad thrown out.

Why is the Kingdom like these ordinary, everyday parts of the life of Jesus' hearers?

Mustard seed is tiny, valueless, usually self-sown, a weed, yet the life within it grows amazingly into a welcoming home for birds.

Yeast has tiny grains, but hidden in a large quantity of flour, kneaded by hand, it secretly spreads through the dough, transforming it until it is enough to feed the whole town.

Kingdom work may be secret, hidden, but there is a surprising presence, an invasiveness, a subversiveness; it is more potent than we can imagine.

But Kingdom work may also be filled with extreme delight at the discoveries of the Kingdom: the merchant and the traveller discover this - treasure, a hugely valuable pearl. They are drawn in with their whole heart and sell everything to gain these amazing discoveries, stuff of their dreams.

Or Kingdom work may be all-encompassing, not choosy - but with a hint of risk. The net gathers a huge haul of fish - but some are thrown out.

Kingdom life is action-packed, full of adventure!

Now, if the Kingdom is at hand, among us, can we see signs of it in our world? What do we expect to see? Where would we expect to find it?

Where have you seen God's Kingdom breaking in during this week?
How has God's abundance startled, gladdened, or challenged you?

Or you might like to put it this way: The Kingdom of heaven is like
a woman who takes meals to someone isolated during Coronavirus
a man who provides comfortable seats outside the church building
a woman who visits shut-ins in her care facility, some several times a week - pre-Covid!
a minister who plants seeds which take root and grow into Young Mums' Group, KUCA,
Messy Church, Countdown to Christmas, Cuppa and Chat - and some still germinating
a teenager who helps provide food and conversation to homeless people at the Lake
a man who ...

'Do you understand the parables?' Jesus asked the disciples. 'Yes', they answered. Did they? Even with these five parables to explain the Kingdom to them? Do we? Perhaps our present understanding will grow over time.

'The Good News is that the Kingdom of heaven is like you and me, ordinary sinners/saints, when the Spirit shines through us to part the clouds of this beautiful, broken world.' Darrell Guder

OUR RESPONSES

HYMN *TiS* 164 *The great love of God*

The great love of God
is revealed in the Son
who came to this earth
to redeem every one.

It binds the whole world,
every barrier it breaks,
the hills it lays low,
and the mountains it shakes.

That love, like a stream,
flowing clear to the sea,
makes clean every heart
that from sin would be free.

It's yours, it is ours,
O how lavishly giv'n!
the pearl of great price,
and the treasure of heav'n. D.T. Niles

OFFERING AND PRAYER

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

WCC - Congo, Republic of Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe
Presbytery - Seymour, Avenel-Nagambie

Loving God,
we thank you for your generous gifts to us,
bringing your reign close to us
and allowing us to share Kingdom life
knowing we are never separated from you.

We pray for your Church, O Lord.
Grow in your church a hunger to seek for the Kingdom,
in tiny, seed-like things like new faith,
in hidden treasures like rich pearls.
Help us to make the Kingdom our priority.
Bless the Presbytery of North East Victoria
and the congregations of Seymour and Avenel-Nagambie,
especially now Seymour is in lockdown.

We pray for your world, O Lord.
Where there is COVID-19, grant your healing;
where there is international rivalry, grant your peace;
where there is racism and disregard for Black Lives,
grant a new understanding of the value of all people.
Grant your blessing to the Republic of Congo
and the Republic of Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe
as they work for democratic elections, justice
and fair, sound economic development.

We pray for this land, O Lord.
Grant that all suffering from COVID, all working with patients,
all researchers seeking a vaccine, all suffering financial loss,
all in lockdown, or unemployed,
all separated from family, especially the aged or ill,
may know your gracious care and blessing.
Be with those still suffering from bushfires:
may they be given support and recognition.
Bless those Black Lives still dying in Custody,
those badly treated, and those ignored:
may they share recognition, justice and equality.

The prayer continues...

BEING SENT ON GOD'S MISSION

HYMN TIS 531 *Sent forth by God's blessing*

Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from his table take leave.
The supper is ended, may now be extended
the fruits of his service in all who believe.
The seed of his teaching, our hungry souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for all humankind.
His grace shall incite us, his love shall unite us
to work for his kingdom, his purpose to find.

With praise and thanksgiving, to God ever living
the tasks of our everyday life we will face,
our faith ever-sharing, in love ever-caring,
embracing as neighbours all those of each race.
One feast that has fed us, one light that has led us,
unite us as one in his life that we share.
then may all the living, with praise and thanksgiving
give honour to Christ and his name that we bear.

Omer Westendorf

WORD OF MISSION AND BLESSING

Go forth with wisdom, hope and courage
with hearts open to recognise the Reign of God
and courage to create more space for grace.

The peace of God the Creator,
the peace of Christ the Redeemer,
the peace of the Spirit, the lifegiver
be always with you ***Amen! Amen! Amen!***

