

Worship at Home service Sunday 30th July 2023 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A call to worship:

We look for God in the dramatic.

We discover God in the ordinary.

Invited by God to slow down, we freshly open our eyes to slowly see God's life breaking into our awareness, all around. **Amen**

A gathering prayer:

Loving God, thank you for the wonder of our interconnected universe, sustained and held in being by your love. Tiny seeds nurtured by earth, that grow into great scrubs, sheltering creatures. Barely visible yeast cultures leavening flour for bread. Treasures that make life precious and joyful. Wisdom handed down to us, freshly understood. Your reign breaks around us in so many ways; help us to see and rejoice. **Amen**

StF 254 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

And His righteousness,

And all these things

Shall be added unto you,

Allelu, alleluia.

Man shall not live by bread alone,

But by every word

That proceeds from the mouth of God

Allelu, alleluia.

Ask, and it shall be given unto you.

Seek and ye shall find.

Knock and it shall be opened unto you

Allelu, alleluia.

https://www.google.com/search?q=seek+ye+first+the+kingdom+of+god&rlz=1C1ONGR_en-GBGB1058GB1058&oq=Seek+ye+first+the+Kingdom+of+God&aqs=chrome.0.0i355i512j46i512j0i512l8.521999229j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fstate=ive&vld=cid:17bfd6c4,vid:k3S1wfXmYPw

Bible readings

1 Kings 3.5-12; Psalm 119.129-136; Romans 8.26-39;

Matthew 13.31-33,44-52

Prayer of confession

Lord, we confess that the concerns of the world weigh us down. We worry about our needs, our wants, how others perceive us.

We are so overwhelmed that we fail to riddle the gold from life's dross. We turn to you, seeking the assurance that your kingdom is with us and among us; help us to discern where it lies, so that we may turn our backs on all else.

Grant us the patience to seek you and your ways with the forbearance you show as you wait for us. **Amen.**

Assurance of forgiveness

Almighty God, although we take forever, you have forever – you are the God of Eternity.

We are slow to seek you, slow to learn, slow to grow in faith; but when we are faltering, you wait sure and steady to forgive us; when we are lacking in trust, you forgive us and persist in working out your ways despite us. Thank you, O God of forgiveness and forbearance. **Amen.**

Prayers of thanksgiving

God, we thank you for teaching us the things that matter, the things of true value. We praise you that the treasures of your kingdom are hidden beneath the mundanity, and sometimes the drama, of everyday life; and that they are often there in small ways that, if nurtured, grow in abundance. Thank you for your pearls of wisdom and your seeds of faith. Let your Kingdom grow among us. **Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Lord, you took so much care to describe your kingdom in ways everyone could understand, including us.

Your kingdom come, O Lord.

Your will be done.

We pray today that you will pass on to us that gift of making ourselves accessible.

Keep us from being a stumbling block to those who would seek you; from using language that puzzles; from actions that confuse; from anything that keeps us apart from your people around us.

Your kingdom come, O Lord.

Your will be done.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And 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.**

Time to reflect:

The Kingdom of God is like a Mustard seed, small yet it grows to be a large tree. Jesus chooses to tell a story about the smallest seed, which was sown liberally across the ground, and over time it grows into a tree, the largest in the garden and provides a place for birds to nest.

Jesus skips over the stages of growth because it is not relevant in this parable.

Leon Morris says, 'it is from Jesus and his little band that the mighty kingdom of heaven would emerge'.

These parables are about waiting, even the birds had to wait for the tree to grow before they could rest in the branches. Jesus teaches that the growth of a seed is a mystery just like the growth of the Kingdom of God. We know that a seed needs soil, water, and sunshine to grow, but the question still is - who makes it grow? More importantly, a seed needs to be planted in the ground because a seed, if left alone on a windowsill will not grow. The seed that Jesus talks about is God's word being sown in people's lives, where it will take root and grow. Although for a time the seed seems inactive, we must not be anxious.

This story shows us that the Kingdom of God starts small, just like the mustard seed. Jesus' disciples did not understand that he was not here to establish an earthly kingdom, God's kingdom is very different to the way the world works, as it wants people to have a willingness to serve others. However, even though it starts small, it can grow beyond our expectation.

The Bible tells us, Jesus already began the work of the Kingdom when he was on this earth. At times it is small, so hidden and invisible in places that we are not aware that God is already doing the work. Christians must not lose heart when they feel that God is inactive or absent, when they see so much suffering, evil and the power of darkness taking over this world. God is present and that He will bring justice for each evil perpetrated in His own time. God brings peace and comfort to all who trust in Him.

StF 481 – The Lord's my shepherd.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

A sending out prayer:

Loving God, thank you for your reign breaking in, all around, for those with eyes to see.

May the light of your love be focused within us.

May we create space in our hearts to treasure it.

And may we be of service to your love, now and always.

Amen.