

Dorset South & West.... Written Service
Sunday July 30th 2023
The importance of small things.
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick'

Call to Worship: Who shall separate us
from the love of Christ? Romans 8:35.

STF 545

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and lone with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Prayers of adoration and confession.

The origin of this prayer is based on is unknown, it's supposedly a Jewish prayer from around or just before the time of the Birth of Christ.

*No Praises Are Adequate. Who on earth can adequately sing your praises?
What can my eye see with which I can liken you?
What music is there with which to compare you?
You are above me, below me, within me and without.
All exist in you, all are from you, you give us everything you withhold nothing.
Who on earth can sing your praises?*

Let all that we are bring you our heartfelt praise. Let our humble praise show our gratitude for your loving kindness **Amen**

Forgive us for those ways in our lives that do not reflect the heavenly vision. When our thoughts are unkind. When our ways are slow or reluctant to act charitably. When we seek only our own pleasure at the expense of others. Help us to embody the vision of Christ and with our whole heart to live out that vision. Thank you for your forgiveness and renewing love. Lord God, indeed, be thou my vision. **Amen**

Gospel Reading Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52



The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 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."

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

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

"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.

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

The Parable of the Net

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 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. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked.

"Yes," they replied.

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."

STF 254

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!*

Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and the door shall be opened unto to you;
Allelu-, alleluia:

We shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;
Allelu-, alleluia:

Reflection

One of the best things I enjoy about summer holidays was the opportunity to just read a novel and not to have to worry about anything. You can lose yourself in a good story and you can learn things to. Now I have more time to read I enjoy having the time to check up on things I have never heard about before. Things the writer has inspired me to find more about. I recently read 'The end of the Ocean' by Maja Lunde. A timely novel about climate change and what could happen. However in the story which is about the effects of drought, she mentioned The Guarani Aquifer in South America. Which apparently is a huge underground reservoir that lies under Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil, covering an area of land the size of Texas and California combined.

The aquifer contains enough fresh water to sustain the world's population for 200 years, and as water shortages affect us all in the future, the Guarani Aquifer could be a lifeline for millions. But increased commercial interest in the aquifer's water, and political bickering between the four countries that share it, is threatening this huge resource.

I have been fortunate enough to visit those countries but I never knew about the Aquifer. It's potential, it's vastness and the harm humanity could bring to such a resource.

In our Bible Reading Jesus is telling the crowds stories. In context, of course some of the disciples had to question why Jesus is doing this and why can't he just speak plainly?

I did wonder whether to miss out verses 44 onwards from today's service. The parts about the Weeping and gnashing of teeth and being thrown into the blazing furnace. I guess that's almost too much plain speaking. Yet it's still quite descriptive language.

In the early part of the chapter in response to the disciples questions. Jesus explains that the people have become immune to what is happening around them. They see but don't fully see. They hear but it is perhaps selective hearing and they have become hardened to what is around them.

They were not immune to the problems of life as we experience them today. Political impropriety, warfare and oppression. Worries about how they would cope with much the same things as we struggle with. Tempted to take the wrong way out of situations because it's easy and life can be so difficult.

We so want to lose ourselves in the good things of life and not what is around us. I remember hearing a sad comment about the news, 'people are bored with pictures and stories about starving children in Africa.' Yet do we fully open our eyes and ears to what is happening now in our world, in our neighbourhood? Or have we retreated into a kind of cosy but calloused view of life as it is?

Jesus tells the crowds a story that is not a work of fiction. It's a picture of the things of life that where common place to them. While Jesus tells the story their eyes and ears are opened to the wonder of the kingdom of God that is around them. The treasures of the Kingdom, new and old are there waiting for them to discover them.

As you read the verses of the familiar stories did you notice anything that perhaps you hadn't thought of before?

Possibly because of the novel I have just read. Which raised so many questions for me about what we can do in the face of such overwhelming problems in the world, like climate change. I found the yeast and the dough story had me questioning.

I have tried to make bread before, by hand. It's tough work trying to mix and knead everything together. My recipe was for a teaspoon of yeast to one pound of flour. It's years ago but I can still remember the ache in my arms, trying to make the ingredients turn into bread. This woman Jesus spoke about was mixing not one pound of flour but sixty! We can speculate about how such a mammoth task was done. However the point of this and all the stories is that it only takes a fraction of something so small and perhaps we dismiss to easily, to make a vast difference.

When one teaspoon of yeast is properly kneaded into a pound of flour and left to rest, the joy of seeing how it made the dough increase to more than double it's size.

We can feel overwhelmed by the needs of the world or indeed the things life challenges us to face. However if we stop and look and listen with the eyes and ears of faith. God's kingdom is around us with a full treasure store of all that we could need. Ready and available to those who will engage in the kingdom. In that treasury the riches of God's grace are immeasurable. Vast breaking the boundaries we think are there. Because we think we have so little to give to make a difference.

In all of the stories Jesus tells, people are being active. There's no room for giving in or inertia. They are doing, planting, making, giving, fishing, sorting, making decisions and so on. There's always the element of the unexpected and the huge rewards from something that was thought to be so insignificant.

I guess my favourite story is the mustard seed. From a grain so tiny a huge bush grows and all the birds of the air find rest and shelter in its branches. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the tiny effort we made with what seemed like it was so insignificant could have an impact like that in our world.

Do you know the lovely story of a person throwing washed up starfish back into the sea. The beach is covered with them and someone questioned the person about why they were bothering when the task was impossible. The person responded throwing another starfish back into the ocean "well I just made a difference to that one!"

Michel Quoist wrote a prayer that I will end this reflection with and may it be our prayer too

The wires are holding hands around the holes;
To avoid breaking the ring,
they hold tight the neighbouring wrist,
And it's thus that with holes they make a fence.

Lord, there are lots of holes in my life.
There are some in the lives of my neighbours.
But if you wish, we shall hold hands,
We shall hold very tight,
And together we shall make a fine roll of fence to adorn Paradise.

Prayers of intercession

Let us think about the holes in our world and our desire for wholeness for the entire world.

When we think of the impact a grain of mustard seed can have. We are reminded of the small insignificant seeds that wrongly sown can create a blight upon our world. Little seeds of injustice, words spoken in anger, disparaging looks at those who are different from us. Such tiny seeds can be so destructive to the lives of so many and so much. Great chasms of untold horrors of warfare, greed and acts against humanity can open up.

Help us to find ways to be the small seeds that rightfully sown bring rest and healing to our world.

Lord, in your mercy Hear our prayer

When we think of the Woman who took just a pinch of yeast to work into a vast amount of flour. We are reminded of the small resources we have and yet just a pinch from everybody can make a vast difference to the poverty around us. We pray for the work of aid agencies at home or overseas. Especially those trying to overcome food deprivation.

Lord, in your mercy Hear our prayer

When we think of the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl. We are thankful for our homes and relative peace. We pray for those whose homes and livelihoods are in jeopardy because of warfare or natural disasters. Help us to find a way to bring about peace and a fair share of the earth's resources. Especially to those driven from their homes and reduced to the state of being refugees .

Lord, in your mercy Hear our prayer

When we think of the Parable of the net. Nets are made of ropes entwined together and with holes that can trap and ensnare. Yet the parable talks of an abundance of goodness and the eradication of the bad. We think of the things or people in the news that have caught our attention this week. We pray for an end to all that is unwholesome and an overflowing of your love and life to all in any kind of need.

Lord, in your mercy Hear our prayer

Father of all, help us to see your hand in the small things: in the little acts of kindness; in the joys of our friendships and everyday life. May we trust that your kingdom will come, and help us to do your will. **Amen**

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

STF 520

Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart
and a discerning mind;
give, as I play the Christian's part,
the strength to finish what I start
and act on what I find.

When, in the rush of days, my will
is habit-bound and slow,
help me to keep in vision still
what love and power and peace can fill
a life that trusts in you.

By your divine and urgent claim,
and by your human face,
kindle our sinking hearts to flame,
and as you teach the world your name
let it become your place.

Jesus, with all your Church I long
to see your kingdom come:
show me your way of righting wrong
and turning sorrow into song
until you bring me home.

The Blessing

May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us all now and evermore: and may we go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ. **Amen.**