

12th July 2020 6pm The Sower and the Seed

Service led by Gill Palmer, sermon by Lynda Howells

Bible readings by Rosie Lee and Charlie Palmer, prayers by Charlie Palmer

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[Gill Palmer:] [**Responses read by Charlie Palmer**]

Good evening and welcome to this service of evening prayer from St. John's Church Kenilworth. I hope you've had a good weekend as we welcome back the sunshine. My name is Gill, and I shall be leading the service, which is also special because it's our first live broadcast, so please bear with us. The words we'll be using won't appear on the screen as usual. However, some of you may have seen on the website a link to the words for you to use¹. If not, bear that in mind for next week. Now tonight, Lynda will be bringing us a talk on the parable of the sower, Rosie will bring us our first reading (Hello Rosie!), Charlie will read the second passage, and he'll be bringing us our prayers.

Let us begin with a moment of quiet, as we clear our minds of the busyness of the day, and focus on this shared time with God.

Preparation

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with you

All **and also with you.**

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

All **Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever.**

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

1 https://83a671bb-5b3a-4535-9f1d-40eff07c64cf.filesusr.com/ugd/316cc5_a121b00e56ce421ead8f5cb933431009.pdf

Confession

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All **Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

Absolution

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from your sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Prayer of thanksgiving

Blessed are you, sovereign God,
our light and our salvation;
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You led your people to freedom
by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
May we who walk in the light of your presence
acclaim your Christ, rising victorious,
as he banishes all darkness from our hearts and minds.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

Opening prayer

The day is almost over, and the evening has come;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your Spirit come down upon us

to set us free to sing your praise
for ever and ever.

All **Amen.**

Song: Shout to the Lord

Verse:

My Jesus, My Saviour
Lord there is none like You
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love

My Comfort, My Shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Chorus:

Shout to the Lord, all the earth
Let us sing. Power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You!

Repeat Verse

Repeat Chorus x 2

Nothing compares to the promise I have in You!
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You!

1st reading: Romans 8:1-11 [NIVUK 1984] Life through the Spirit

[Rosie Lee:]

¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷ the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

2nd reading: Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23 [NIVUK 1984] The Parable of the Sower

[Charlie Palmer:]

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was

scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

¹⁸ "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. ²² The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

[Gill:]

And now over to Lynda, who is going to bring us the word.

[Lynda Howells:]

Please, Father God, open our ears for us to hear what you want to say to us. Amen.

How are you feeling today? Happy, sad, worried or confused? What on earth is happening to our world? Where will it all end?

Our world seems so much smaller now. News travels much quicker with the internet and modern communications. We know what's happening almost immediately, before it happens! Is this good or bad? And how do we deal with it?

At the moment we are seeing and hearing constantly of the havoc the pandemic is causing, both here and abroad. The loss of life, the illness, the devastation caused to so many who have lost their jobs. The security of life as they know it, stripped away. And I confess that there are times when I'm discouraged. And I find myself worrying about the future, especially for those I love, and for all who are really struggling. Then what?

So, in the parable of the sower, Jesus tells how the farmer sows seed in his field. The seeds have different experiences, according to where they fall. Some seeds fell along the path and was eaten by the birds. Some fell on rocks, where it grew for a while, and then it died. Some fell among thorns: that had no chance - nowhere to grow. Some fell on good soil and produced a wonderful harvest.

Jesus went on to explain to His disciples what He meant through the words of the parable of the sower. And He explained that it was about preaching of the Gospel. The Good News is told the people, and this message of hope is for everyone.

The seed which fell on the path represents those who heard the message about

God's kingdom, but their hearts are hardened and they don't want to know. And they're not even willing to try and understand. They're simply not interested. So the pressures, enticements of the world win.

Those who receive the seed which falls in rocky places is like seed which falls under a bit of soil in the rocks. It springs up, but because the root has nowhere to go through the rocks, the hot sun comes and withers it, and it dies. This refers to a pool of people who make spur-of-the-moment, emotional decisions to follow Jesus without any real personal commitment or cost. And the minute there is a spiritual problem in their lives, this sense of searching for the next emotional pickup.

The one who receives the seeds which falls among the thorns represents those who are attracted to Jesus. But the worries of this world - and especially at the moment with the virus and all its implications - and the lure of worldliness, money and greed, and all the other material and worldly temptations on offer, choke the seed and the Word of God dies in their hearts.

But the one who receives the seed which falls on good ground hears it and understands it, and is obedient to the calling of Jesus, and produces a crop yielding much more than that which was sown.

So think for a moment about grass seed: you sow it. You water it. You wait for a while, and then suddenly the ground starts to turn green. The seed has taken root. And through care and watering it grows. And all this comes from spreading some dry uninteresting-looking grass seed. Our lives can take this pattern at times: we read God's Word, the grass seed. And at times perhaps we struggle to believe what He's telling us and promising us through His Word. But it is then that we need to water that Word through prayer and our quiet times with our Heavenly Father. And as we give ourselves to the reading of God's Holy Word, really believing that it is true, and possible, then gradually we are changed, we are strengthened. And we are enabled to help our Father God in producing a harvest and growing His Kingdom.

As I said earlier, our world is in such a mess. But we who profess to know and love God have an amazing opportunity to speak of the hope, the assurances, the promises we have through knowing Jesus. And we need to pray for opportunities to share this Good News in a gentle and loving way.

And we're also called to take responsibility to pray for our government. Setting politics aside, we need to pray for all our leaders. that they would be led by our Father God, and be obedient to His teaching for the benefit of all, and most importantly at this time to have wisdom and the humility to listen to those who have the knowledge within the fields of science and medicine, to guide them as to the way forward to come through this coronavirus.

Prayer changes situations. And if we want to be part of helping God's will flourish and grow for the good of all, and each one of us has the capability and the opportunity to be part of that growth and that change to our commitment to prayer. I read a while ago that prayer takes the situation out of our hands and puts it into God's hands. Do you believe this?

Sister Wendy Beckett said, "Prayer is God taking possession of us." Do you want God to take possession of you?

Amen.

[Gill:]
Thank you, Lynda.

Thank you, so let's just take a moment to reflect on Lynda's words.

[pause]

The Creed

We shall now say the Creed.

All I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Intercessions

[Gill:]

Charlie will now lead us in our prayers.

[Charlie:]

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for a beautiful world which You created for us to enjoy and to shepherd. We see Your hand at every turn of the path: beautiful vista, blooming flower, busy garden bird. We marvel at the new growth we see around us and feel in it a deep connection to Your unbounded love for us. As we begin to harvest fruits and vegetables, let us be reminded that You are the great provider.

All Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

The world aches and groans until You bring new order. We are anxious and frightened. Some exhausted, some lonely, all aware of the families grieving for lost loved ones. You are not far away. And we reach out to You in our uncertainty and distress and ask for Your comfort. We pray particularly for those who have lost jobs, or who are worried that their job may be at risk. Father comfort us and open new paths to employment, when needed.

All Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Creator God, guide us through these difficult times, comfort us, provide for us, give us good sleep, share our anxieties, give us hope for better times when we can meet together as Your church and hold our loved ones.

Give us opportunities to share our burdens with good friends. May we see You in them.

We pour out our troubles to You Lord, knowing that You will never turn away. May we bask in Your grace for a little while.

Lord, in your mercy
All **hear our prayer.**

Father, we especially pray for young people this evening who are missing their friends and the camaraderie of the classroom. Keep them safe. Reassure them that they will catch up whatever work has been missed, and that there will be a time when School will be back to normal.

Lord, in your mercy
All **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the charity Taste Life set up by Di Archer, to help those with eating disorders. We pray that the charity finds a clear route through the currently increasing demand for its services. And in the longer term, we pray for a clear path for sustainable growth. We pray Your blessing on this life changing work.

Lord, in your mercy
All **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our leaders. Lord gives them wisdom, and clarity, as they continue to plan our route out of lockdown. Give them vision for how we can make things better for the future. May they be bold and find opportunity in our adversity.

Lord, in your mercy
All **hear our prayer.**

Finally, Lord, we pray especially for those grieving for lost loved ones. Numbers do not dilute our grief. We pray for comfort and look forward to a time when we can come together to remember and give thanks for wonderful lives and times.

At this time we especially pray for the families and friends of Ralph Werrell and Eileen Norcliffe.

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

The Lord's Prayer

And now gathering our prayers and praises into one,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **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 for ever.
Amen.**

Song: The Power of Your Love

Lord, I come to You
Let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace
That I've found in You
Lord, I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of Your love

Chorus:

Hold me close
Let Your love surround me
Bring me near
Draw me to Your side
And as I wait
I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love

Lord, unveil my eyes
Let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love
As You live in me
Lord, renew my mind
As Your will unfolds in my life
In living every day
By the power of Your love

Chorus x 2

And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love

And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love

The Grace

[Gill:]

So before we go, let's say the grace together.

All **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore.
Amen.**

So thank you for joining us this evening and may God keep you safe in the week to come. And remember Lynda's call to commit to prayer this week. Bye.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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