

Greatham, Empshott and Hawkley with Priors Dean

Prayers at Home 26th July

And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Words: Charles Wesley 1707-88

Tune: Sagina - T. Campbell c.1800

Introduction



It will take some getting used to but people are bringing a piece of bread and a small cup or glass into which wine is poured as we enter church. More people are wearing masks and we are becoming more comfortable as we learn new ways of having communion.



- 1 O give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples.
- 2 Sing to him, sing praises,
and tell of all his marvellous works.
- 3 Rejoice in the praise of his holy name;
let the hearts of them rejoice who seek the Lord.
- 4 Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his face continually.
- 5 Remember the marvels he has done,
his wonders and the judgements of his mouth,
- 6 O seed of Abraham his servant,
O children of Jacob his chosen.
- 7 He is the Lord our God;
his judgements are in all the earth.

Reading**Matt 13:31-33.44-52**

³¹ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² 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." ³³ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with^[d] three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

⁴⁴ "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.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." ⁵² 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." ⁵³ When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.

Refection by Elizabeth Hawkins

Planting a seed in the soil, waiting for it to germinate and then caring for it as it grows into a sturdy plant is one of the most rewarding tasks for a gardener. Not only does the plant bring delight to the one who planted, but becomes a source of food for visiting creatures who, in turn, spread the pollen or the fruit for new plants to grow another year.

Jesus' parables are a means of helping his disciples to understand what the Kingdom of God is like. 'Look around you,' he says. The Kingdom of God has already come. Small and hidden but with potential for great growth. God is unseen but, hidden in the hearts of those who seek him, is a tiny seed of faith which, if well nurtured, will grow and like the mustard tree's branches will one day reach out to shelter not just birds but the whole of mankind.

Some come to faith by chance, like the finding of the buried treasure, others purposely seek it throughout their lives until they find it, like the pearl merchant, and when it is found it brings life - changing joy similar to the yeast transforming the dough.

There were many who opposed Jesus' teaching as not adhering strictly to the Jewish Law but he replies, 'I have not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it. I come to make all things new.' Without change there can be no growth.

What has gone before is still of value as a foundation on which to build the new. We have had to forgo much of the ceremony and ritual which we have grown up with in our churches lately but new ways have been found to call the faithful to prayer Sunday by Sunday and have opened our eyes to future possibilities.

It is up to each one of us to nurture the seed of faith planted within us. As Psalm 105 says, 'seek the Lord and his strength.' We are to be an inclusive church, so like the plant in the garden, may others find the sustenance they are seeking and the joy of fulness of life, as what we have learnt from Jesus' teaching is passed on.

Let us grasp the new things God is doing in our time and place.

Prayers

Gracious God, in your fragile world, be with those who are ill, anxious, afraid or isolated. In their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light. Be with all who work in the NHS and especially with those exhausted or stressed; give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a vaccine. Be with doctors, nurses, carers, volunteers and researchers; with those working in the community; that through their work many will be restored to health. Lord hear our prayer.

Be with the leaders of our world. Give them wisdom, integrity, honesty and strength in the face of the challenges they face. Be with us as we learn to live in a different world and tackle new choices. Be with schools as this term comes to an end; with teachers and children; with young people whose exams have been cancelled and who worry about the uncertainty that lies ahead. Lord hear our prayer.

Be with those whose working life has been turned upside down; with the self-employed and with those whose businesses have failed or are at risk; with those who have lost their jobs or are in fear of doing so. Be with them as they struggle with the difficult decisions that need to be made. Lord hear our prayer.

Be with the most vulnerable and the fearful, with the homeless who are returning to live on the streets;, with those who cannot make decisions for themselves and rely on the love and compassion of others; give courage and strength to those who help and support them. Be with all those that we care for and worry about, the people we know who are unwell or who are especially vulnerable ...(pause). Lord hear our prayer.

Merciful Father

accept the prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that 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.

Conclusion

Let's pray for God's blessing.

Seek the Lord and his strength;

seek the Lord in this new day and in this coming week

seek the Lord in the beauty of Creation and in every person you meet.

May God who us Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless us now and always.

Amen.