

26th July 2020 Sunday Service – Heacham Parish Church

Alison plays 'Amazing Grace' on the church organ

'Amazing Grace' - words by John Newton. He was in the 18th century British Navy, captain of a slavery ship doing the triangle of Britain, West Africa, West Indies. He had a dramatic conversion to anti-slavery and Christianity when his ship was battered in an Atlantic storm for 17 hours: "he cried aloud to God for succour". He left the slave trade, was ordained in 1764, wrote 280 hymns. Newton published 'Amazing Grace' in 1779 as a poem. The tune we use first appeared in 1831; ironically in Virginia USA, probably taken there by Scottish colonists. I chose to play it this week as 30th July is Anti-Slavery Day - remembering the efforts of William Wilberforce and others.

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you **and also with you.**

As we gather in our homes, together yet apart, we meet in the presence of God.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it

Today, Sunday 26th July, Heacham Parish Church gathers and worships in at least three ways. Some of you are reading this service on paper in your home, some of you are watching this service on your mobile or computer through YouTube , and some of you are in church for our first service in our church building since March. All of us worshipping together yet apart, with much of the service the same wherever you are.

Christ yesterday and today,

the beginning and the end.

Alpha and Omega, all time belongs to him, and all ages;

to him be glory and power, through every age and for ever. Amen.

God, our God, nothing can separate us from your love;

not things in our past, nor things to come.

There is nowhere we can go to flee from you,

nor can anyone come between us,

for your love is with us in life, and through to our life's end.

Amen.

Song: 'Come, learn of God's Kingdom' played and sung by Sue, Lesley, Judith, Lynda, and Hilary
(to the tune: When a knight won his spurs)

Come, Learn of God's Kingdom, the kingdom of light,
its dawning dispelling the darkness of night,
the light of God's glory is shining abroad,
in splendour proclaiming that Jesus is Lord.

Come, seek for God's Kingdom, the kingdom of Christ,
a pearl without equal, a treasure unpriced,
a city unshaken the years cannot move,
where life everlasting is founded on love.

Come, enter God's Kingdom, the gates are flung wide,
to win us our freedom the Saviour has died:
the keys of the kingdom are theirs who proclaim
the word of the gospel and faith in his Name.

Inherit God's Kingdom; for Jesus declares
to those who confess him, the kingdom is theirs:
O come then rejoicing, his glories to sing,
as heirs of that kingdom where Christ is the King!

A Reflection from Penny Sutton:

This is the third week that our passage has come from Chapter 13 of Matthew's gospel. This chapter appears to record one day in the earthly ministry of Jesus and, as Pip said last week, marks a turning point in events. Increasing opposition from religious leaders has made clear to Jesus that he is heading imminently for crucifixion. How does he explain this to his disciples? Clearly their first question will be 'What about the Kingdom of Heaven that we have been teaching?' It is this question that these seven parables answer.

Why use parables? They clearly puzzled the disciples as, privately, they asked Jesus to explain them. He gave two reasons for their use. Firstly, many people do not want to know spiritual truths so their interest has to be aroused. Secondly, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would speak in parables. The word parable means 'to cast alongside'; to clarify the meaning of a spiritual truth with a parallel from everyday life. Jesus called them mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. These truths can only be understood by divine revelation and here is Jesus the Son revealing them to all who will listen.

Seven parables describing three stages of the Kingdom of Heaven:

1. How the Kingdom of Heaven begins. The parable of the sower describes how the seeds of faith are sown. Veronica talked about each of us having a story to tell. A story which may sow seeds of faith for others.
 2. How the kingdom is opposed. The parable of the weeds describes one of Satan's three activities.
 - a) false Christians. Pip reminded us that our world is populated not only by the good but also the bad and the ugly.
 - b) false growth. Jesus did not explain the parable of the mustard seed so we need to compare other parables and bible usage to understand this. From the parable of the sower we know that the birds represent Satan. The bible uses a tree as a symbol of worldly power. International churches can be seen as world powers. Their property and wealth can, and does, give rise to corruption.
 - c) false doctrine. Throughout the bible yeast symbolises evil. Jewish households still today remove all leaven before Passover. Thus, in the parable of the yeast Jesus refers to hypocrisy, false teaching and worldly compromise which, like yeast, grow quietly and insidiously.
 3. How people find the kingdom. Both the parables of the treasure and the pearl illustrate the incalculable value of the Kingdom of Heaven and the cost of gaining this. The treasure was found accidentally in the course of normal everyday life, while the pearl was diligently sought over a long period of time. Perhaps these are two extremes used to illustrate that God calls each one of us by a unique path to his kingdom. The parable of the net offers us a challenge to persevere on that pathway. It concerns judgment and separation. As a drag net scoops up all creatures in the sea so on his return Jesus will gather all on this earth and separate the righteous from the unrighteous. The first coming of Jesus to this earth began the process of final judgment. It is not yet complete.
He taught and lived a kingdom of two halves, separating out:
those who believe in him from----those who reject him
justice and truth-----from-----injustice and lies.
These are the two groups he will separate.
Jesus asks: 'Do you understand?'
Finally, he likened a teacher of the law who has accepted the Kingdom of Heaven to a householder producing both old and new treasures from his store. That is what we must do. While we are rooted in the old, the unchanging law of the Lord, we must also bear the new fruit of the Kingdom of Heaven.
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Song: 'Great is the darkness', sung and played by Rosie and Colin

Great is the darkness that covers the earth
Oppression, injustice and pain
Nations are slipping in hopeless despair
Though many have come in Your name
Watching while sanity dies, touched by the madness and lies.

Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus
Pour out Your spirit we pray
Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus
Pour out Your spirit on us today.

May now Your church rise with power and love
This glorious gospel proclaim
In every nation salvation will come
To those who believe in Your name
Help us bring light to this world that we might speed Your return.

Great celebrations on that final day
When out of the heavens You come
Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end
And rulers will bow at Your throne
Our great commission complete then face to face we shall meet.

Prayers of intercession, led by Chris Murray

Let us join together in prayer.

Most powerful Holy Spirit come down upon us and subdue us. From heaven where the ordinary is made glorious, and glory seems but ordinary, bathe us with the brilliance of your light like dew.

Father, as we come to you in prayer today, we bring before you the needs of our world at this time. We give thanks for the privilege of the NHS and remember before you all the other countries where access to health care is not easy or even impossible. May, in time to come, all be able to receive care as we do.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for all who are giving time to help others during this pandemic. Those who in this community, and others around the country, are delivering prescriptions or shopping to those who are having to shield. Protect each one and may all who are shielding know your peace.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We give thanks that the lockdown is slowly easing now. We ask for patience and respect between us as we social-distance in shops, for common-sense to follow the guidelines set out to keep us safe; so that we may all look forward to a time when we can return to a more normal way of life without fear.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We remember before you all those who are unwell at this time in body, mind, or spirit; especially those known to us. Bring them healing and peace in their distress.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

May the road rise to meet you; may the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and the rain fall softly on your fields. Until we meet again may God hold you in the hollow of His hand.

Amen

We pray together The Lord's Prayer; lead by Shona Waters using Makaton (finger-spelling) signs.



Final Prayer

Send us out, Lord:
to love and to live,
to act and to give,
to pray and to serve.
In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.
May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.
May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.
May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.
May the blessing of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you, and those you love,
now and always.

*Alison plays (on the church organ) 'Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Her' (To God alone on high be glory).
Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Ehr - German translation of the Latin text 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo'. Put into chorale
(hymn) format by Nicolas Decius. He became a German Evangelical preacher, in 1523, after hearing Martin
Luther preach. However, interestingly, his three extant hymns are based on the Sanctus, the Gloria, and the
Agnus Dei from the Latin Mass. The music is by Vincent Lubeck (died 1740).*

Next Wednesday night to Thursday night, July 29th-30th, the Jewish people mark the fast day of Tisha B'Av when many disasters happened to them. As the Jewish people look back on history, let's do the same and come before God to acknowledge the sins committed in and by, our nation towards the Jewish people, and by those speaking and acting in the name of Christ. We will also remember with thanksgiving our godly heritage towards the Jewish people.

Teaching and prayer from 2pm to 3-30pm **If you would like to join, please let me know and I send you the link on the morning of 30th July** Rosemary's email address is: repairingthebreach2018@gmail.com