

Morning Service 26th July

Thank you for joining us for this morning service, whether you're in Cudham Church, or watching on facebook or youtube. I'm Rev John Musson, vicar of Cudham and Downe and I'm joined by Helen Musson, Ordinand at St Augustines college.

*You'll find the words of the service on the church website pcd.org.uk. Please say the words in **bold***

Today we hear Jesus tell another two stories – about mustard seeds and sourdough bread.

The Greeting

*We have not met in church since before Easter.
As the Easter Candle is lit we proclaim the presence of our Risen Lord.*

Halleluia, Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed, Halleluia!

As we enter God's holy presence this morning,
are you ready to hear again about God's kingdom?

Come, open your hearts and minds
to see the kingdom around us and within us.
Come, and worship the living God. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer

Lord God, as we gather in your house,
we thank you for your presence, here with us.
Thank you, Lord, that each one of us is unique,
yet we share a common bond in you.

**We come together as one body,
but we all learn and experience things in different ways.
We thank you for your amazing word
that gives us so many pictures of your kingdom.
Something for everyone,
something to feed our hearts and minds.
Be with us, Lord,
and bless us richly as we call upon your name.
Amen.**

Prayer as children leave for Sunday Club-please wait until you are asked!

We now spend time reflecting on our need to say sorry and to hear God forgive us.

Lord Jesus,
sometimes we do not notice
what you are doing.
Help us to recognise your kingdom.

Sometimes we are too concerned
about ourselves
to notice other people in need:
Help us to recognise your kingdom.

Sometimes we miss the opportunity
to serve you and others:
Help us to recognise your kingdom. Amen.

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer for Today – 7th Sunday after Trinity

Generous God, you give us gifts and make them grow:
though our faith is small as mustard seed,
make it grow to your glory and the flourishing of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible Reading Matthew 13.31-33,44-52

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew
Glory to you, O Lord

31 Jesus told the crowd another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 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.”

33 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.”

44 “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.

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

47 “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 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. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51 “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied.

52 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."

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

Talk

Thanks for joining us if you're watching this service at home. I know it's different to the services Helen and I have been able to share with you over the last few months, but I hope you will still experience God being with you as we share in this act of worship.

For those of you here in church, I was going to say it's great to see you face to face... but... maybe that should be face covering to face covering?

The last couple of weeks we've been looking together at Jesus' parables of the Kingdom, in particular the parable of the seeds and the soil, and the wheat and the weeds. Both parables Jesus shares with a crowd and then explains to his disciples. We've learned that the kingdom of God grows and thrives when our hearts are ready, prepared and when we allow the word of God to permeate our lives.

Today, we've just heard another five, or is it six? Short but pithy parables, from mustard seeds to good and bad fish, all related to the kingdom. It's as if one image isn't enough to describe the kingdom, and we need to have ears to hear, as Jesus said, ears open to the Spirit of God to build up a picture of what this might mean for us. Let's look briefly at each of these picture stories:-

- The mustard seed. In some way, this resonates with our present situation. How can something so small, something like a virus, have such a great effect on our lives? God's kingdom, like the small mustard seed seems insignificant to many, if they don't see its purpose, but if we let it grow and flourish in lives prepared and open to the Spirit, then it not only grows, but offers safety and shelter eternally to us and to others
- The leavened bread. Again, over the last few months many of us have turned again to baking. Leaven is not yeast – the analogy is more that of sourdough. You keep it going, take a bit and add it to your bake, kneading it in – and see the results! God's kingdom feeds our troubled souls.
- The hidden treasure. This and the pearl speak of the huge value of the kingdom in comparison with everything else the world can offer. Notice the risk of the kingdom here-he sells all he has in order to buy the field. What might we need to give up in terms of attitudes, practices and possessions so that the kingdom becomes that treasure for us?
- The pearl. Same as the treasure? Not quite... the treasure just happened to be found – no metal detectors in Jesus' day! Here Jesus describes a merchant – someone who's life is dedicated to the task of finding this pearl. She is searching – do we seek the kingdom, or are we so preoccupied with other things that God's kingdom doesn't take priority?
- The good and bad fish. Never noticed this one before? The kingdom of heaven is like a net – the dragnet catches everything – and this parable, like the ones in the last two weeks, comes with an explanation – as with the seeds and the weeds, the kingdom is diverse and inclusive. It's a kingdom that we see here on earth when we as citizens of that kingdom search for it and show its values, but it won't be seen fully until the end of time.

So that's 5 – or are there 6? Jesus says (v50) have you understood – and they reply 'yes' - not a smart move – anyone who claims to fully understand the kingdom definitely hasn't! And what does 'understood' mean? Yes, we might get the point; yes, we might know our bibles well- but like the seed in good soil, like the wheat growing and producing fruit, like the mustard seed, the leavened bread, the treasure and the pearl, the fruits of the kingdom – the fruit of the spirit, lives transformed, lives committed to worship and witness – all this will not be seen this side of eternity.

What does seeking the kingdom therefore mean for you, and for me? How do we seek the kingdom? How much do we long for the kingdom, how can we reshape our lives to yearn for Jesus the King today?

A prayer of response...

Father God,

Help us by your Spirit to seek and find your kingdom:

- As tiny as a mustard seed
- As powerful as yeast
- As valuable as a treasure chest
- As wonderful as a precious pearl
- Open to all and yet requires the dedication of our hearts

In Jesus name we pray. **Amen**

Music for reflection...

The Creed

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

The prayers - *the response is 'May the truths of your kingdom be our strength.'*

God of love and wisdom,
in our prayers today we bring to you
the nations of the world and their leaders
amid growing tensions, accusations and mistrust.

We give thanks

for those pooling their resources to find a vaccine for the corona virus;
for those offering sanctuary to refugees.

We remember and pray for those countries where we have family and friends,
and all those places whose suffering touches our hearts. Lord...

May the truths of your kingdom be our strength.

We pray for those industries hardest hit economically;
for all who are struggling with self-worth after losing their jobs;

for young people applying for university;
for those applying for benefits;
for charities struggling to cope with increased demand and reduced income. Lord...
May the truths of your kingdom be our strength.

We pray for churches and places of worship
as they welcome congregations back;
for courage as they encounter new challenges
and joy as they embrace new opportunities.
We pray for one another as we reflect on the parables and live out our faith. Lord...
May the truths of your kingdom be our strength.

We pray for those heading to the coast this summer for days out and holidays;
for safety on the roads, on the beaches and in the sea;
for those who work in the emergency services;
for lifeguards and lifeboat crews.
We pray that everyone would respect the environment
and we pray for those who collect litter.
We pray too for those unable to get away or take a break. Lord...
May the truths of your kingdom be our strength.

And we pray for those who are ill,
those in hospital and those at home;
those awaiting operations and treatment;
and those receiving palliative care.
We remember those who have died,
and pray for those who are grieving –
especially those who were unable to gather to comfort one another. Lord...
May the truths of your kingdom be our strength.

We keep a few moments of silence for our own prayers.

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

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
so in faith and trust we pray:

**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.**

We share the peace

Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross.
We meet in his name and we share his peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you:
And also with you.

Please turn around and share the peace in a non-contact way with those near you

We remember Jesus words at the Last Supper

If you feel able, you are invited when directed to come forward with your arms out to receive Holy Communion in the form of the bread only. Please make your way to the front, and after you have received, return to your seat by turning left and going round the side.

Please enjoy the reflective music during the administration of communion

Closing prayer

Lord, please help me to remember
(touch forehead with finger)
that when I feel as small as a mustard seed
(crouch down to the floor)
you are within me,
and I can grow into a mighty tree
(uncurl and reach as high as you can)
and share your love and protection with others.
(stretch out arms towards others)
Amen

Thank you for joining us in worship today. Details of our next services are found on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PCDChurches/> where you can watch the service live or catch up later, and you'll find this week's notice sheet and other useful information on the church website pcd.org.uk

Next week, weather permitting, we meet for a reflective service outside Cudham Church – 11am Sunday 2nd August. Helen will be preparing a reflection for families to take part in too. Please bring a chair, and maybe a flask/refreshments so you can chat with others before or after the service at social distance.

*Please also contact the Vicar, Rev John Musson if you need any help or just for a chat! vicar@pcd.org.uk
01959540012*

Blessing

God of the kingdom,
may we plant the seeds,
may we grow like the yeast,
may we seek your treasure,

may we prize your pearl,
may we come into the net
of your kingdom,
this week and every week.

And may the blessing of God rest upon us;
The blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Go in the peace of Christ

Thanks be to God

Please remain in your seats until directed to leave by the stewards. Please leave promptly, using the hand sanitiser on your way out. Feel free to chat at a social distance in the churchyard or in Cudham Rec.