



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

10am – Sunday 26 July 2020

Music to prepare us for worship *“Prelude on Hanover” (Praise my soul the King of Heaven)* J Alban Hinton (1934),
“Prelude in A minor” J S Bach (1685-1750), *“Lobe den Herren – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of
Creation”* J Walther (1684-1748), *“Lamento”* Alexandre Guilmant (1837-92)

The bell sounds, then quietness

Welcome

Music of approach *“If ye love me”* music by Peter Aston

Carolyn Schmid/organ

Call to worship

Kia noho a Ihowa ki a koutou. May God be with you.

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

God, your reign is among us in surprising places,

hidden in the everyday, small but precious, above us and below us.

Your reign is here and now, and we gather as part of it to worship You.

Hymn

(tune Abbot's Leigh, CH4 615) HIOS 135 - Colin Gibson

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice
which is more than liberty.
There's no place where human
sorrows
are more deeply felt than heaven;
there's no place where human failings
have such kindly judgments given.

2 For the love of God is broader
than the measures of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
But we make that love too narrow
by the limits of our own;
and we magnify God's strictness
with a zeal Love will not own.

3 There is grace enough for thousands
of new worlds as great as this;
there is room for fresh creations
in that endless world of bliss.
If our love were but more simple,
we would trust the living Word;
and our lives would fill with gladness
in the joy of Christ our Lord.

Prayer, assurance of forgiveness –

E te whanau, in Christ we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Kia tau te rangimarie o te Karaiti ki runga i a koutou. May the peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

Art and music “*Holy Holy Holy*”, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Children

Prayer for Illumination

Hymn

AA 123 - Shirley Murray

1 Small things count, so Jesus said:
cups of water, crumbs of bread,
small things done because we're kind
count as big things in God's mind.

2 Small things make the big things
grow:
grains of yeast inside the dough,
puffs that fill a big balloon,
notes that make a happy tune.

Readings – Listen for God's Word to us ...

Romans 8:26-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church **Thanks be to God**

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; 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." He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." "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. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." 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."

This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ Praise to Christ the Word

Reflection "Hidden in plain view"

COVID-19 shows how something small and invisible to the eye can grow rapidly and exponentially into a force that consumes our attention and resources, as individuals, communities, nations, and as a world. In the 1930s, the doctor, teacher and minister in a small town called Kurow in the Waitaki Valley, noticed the poverty among local workers and talked with each other. They began the movement that led to New Zealand's welfare system. In the late 1890s, just down the road from here, some women and the local minister noticed the appalling conditions in which women worked and so formed the Seamstresses Union that led to changes to those working conditions for our whole nation. At some point, some women gathered together and talked and planned, and so we have universal suffrage.

The five parables today show how the reign of God emerges from something almost invisible to the eye, how it grows cumulatively, offering sustenance. The parables show that this reign of God is a treasure worthy of all our attention and resources. The first two parables draw attention to remarkable growth arising from insignificant beginnings. Last week in the United States Congressman John J. Lewis died. I was part of a group of 20 international students who in 1983 he hosted for afternoon tea in his home in Atlanta. This remarkable man, at the age of 23 stood in the famous gathering in Washington and spoke before Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech. This humble man planted seeds of justice and liberty and over his 80 years they grew and flourished. The best parts of our lives come from people who have planted seeds of life and love and hope with us and in our world. The second two parables point to discovering something of such great value that we are willing to sell all we have to possess it.

A common theme of all the parables is hiddenness. The sower hides seeds in the soil. The woman hides yeast in the flour. The treasure is hidden in a field. The pearl of great value is hidden among many others, and the pearl in a tough exterior. The net of fish is hidden under the surface of the sea. Now it might be thought that to see these things requires great skill or luck. But that is not so! What is hidden are actually objects that appear in plain view nearly every day. The great American preacher Barbara Brown Taylor says: "If we want to speak of heavenly things, Jesus seems to say, we may begin by speaking about earthly things, and if we want to describe what is beyond all words, we may begin with words we know, words such as: man, woman, field, seed, bird, air, yeast, bread; words such as: pearl, net, sea, fish, joy. These are the places to dig for the kingdom of heaven; these are the places to look for the will and rule and presence of God. If we cannot find them here we will never find them anywhere else, for earth is where the seeds of heaven are sown, and their treasure is the only one worth having."

Where is the hidden reign of God in front of us?

- Watch children interact with adults, including in our congregation, their attentiveness in us and in what we do – it is said that children learn by looking sideways;
- I remember the enormous dignity with which a child carried a tray of bread down the aisle during a Communion service;
- I saw recently a person across the road outside a café bend down to someone who appeared to be homeless and talked with that person with respect and care;
- This week I noticed how a busy person went out of her way to check on someone's wellbeing;
- I have seen how human beings care deeply for each other in times of struggle and illness;
- I remember how holy laughing connects people – I will never forget when I mistakenly said one Christmas Eve, instead of we will sing while sitting, that we will sin while sitting and 700 people spontaneously laughed;
- I have seen how one person can change a conversation from cynicism and criticism to an atmosphere of trust and hope.
- And how often have people come to us years after we were with them and spoken of something we said or did that helped them through, changing their lives.

There is another aspect worth noticing, the diverse socioeconomic settings in these parables: a sower of seed, a woman baking bread, a fortune seeker, a merchant looking for a pearl, a fisher with a net. In attending to the everydayness of our living, in all our diversity, we can see the reign of God. Notice, the reign of God is not revealed in an imperial force or a marching army or a grand announcement or startling edifice. We are invited to see signs of the reign of God in incredibly diverse settings and people. So cultivate the practice of seeing God's work among us: Build in ourselves the expectation we will see what is in front of us, and be ready to have our expectations overturned.

Now Jesus speaks elsewhere of what emerges from these small beginnings. The mustard seed becomes a shrub, sturdy enough to house the nests of birds. And Jesus says of those birds - "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." The yeast makes bread and bread feeds the multitudes, the five thousand, and, says Matthew, it was not just the men who were fed, but also the women and children (14:21; 15:38)—those who are often most vulnerable when food is scarce. And what happens when we discover the reign of God like treasure hidden in the field? Jesus says: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal." And "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (6:21). The reign of God does not ignore our needs but does challenge our material excess acquired for self-serving purposes. From something small, the reign of God is spreading and its worth giving ourselves and all we have to that reign.

Paul says to the Church at Rome, we are "more than conquerors". We are called to be more than Stoics who endure and are eventually rewarded with relief. This is not pie in the sky when we die. Paul takes utterly seriously the powers of sin and death to kill creation. Paul says though that these powers will be dissolved into the glory of God, that there will be a time, when the spreading reign of God tips the balance, even episodically, and creation will be increasingly reconciled. And in the meantime God's fierce, compassionate love endures, and nothing in all creation can separate us from it. The reign of God, spreading, influencing, working away, hidden in plain view. Let's keep opening our eyes.

Hymn

1 As trees from tiny seeds can grow,
as yeast expands the lifeless dough,
as light, unhampered, shines around,
so does God's gracious love abound.

2 As hidden treasure is reclaimed,
we, God's new people, are renamed.
For us the pearl, long sought, is found.
Christ is our treasure sure and sound.

(tune O Waly Waly CH4 234) A Singing Faith 27- Jane Parker Huber

3 We are not promised weedless fields.
Nor are we given equal yields.
But God's true faithfulness shall stay
with us, supporting all the way.

4 As coins, once lost, are found with joy,
as Jesus loves each girl and boy,
so we, now found by God, rejoice,
lifting in praise one heart and voice.

We are sent

Prayer for others and the Lord's Prayer

Anglican prayer book

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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the
glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.
Murua ō mātou hara,
Me mātou hoki e muru nei
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia
whakawaia;
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.

An aspect of mission

Hymn

(tune CH4 512) - Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

1 To what can the kingdom of God be compared?
A mustard seed falls where a field's been prepared,
and there, where predictable plantings should be,
there grows up a wild bush — as big as a tree!
God of love, here on earth, hidden things still surprise:
Loving deeds ... signs of birth ... faithful, Spirit-filled lives.
Your reign is amazing, your ways still astound,
just like that new life springing forth from the ground.

2 A small bit of leaven will change the whole bread:
a poor woman sees that her neighbours are fed,
a church reaches out to the youth in the town,
a man shares his faith and God's blessings abound.
God of love, here on earth, hidden things still surprise:
Loving deeds ... signs of birth ... faithful, Spirit-filled lives.
Your reign is among us, creation is blessed,
when even a few faithful lives change the rest.

3 While some look for treasure or one priceless pearl,
God's reign is the gift wise ones seek in this world.
A girl sells possessions to help those in need;
a boy chooses faithfulness rather than greed.
God of love, here on earth, hidden things still surprise:
Loving deeds ... signs of birth ... faithful, Spirit-filled lives.
Your reign is a treasure that wise ones pursue;
may we seek your kingdom in all that we do.

Dedication of offering – *Please place your offerings in the offering bags held out for you at the door as you leave. Please do this as soon as you are able.*

Blessing

Music for our leaving "*In these stones horizons sing*" Karl Jenkins (2004) arr Jeremy Allen
played by Carolyn Schmid

In relation to your monetary offering, you may:

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) - contact Helen Thew at plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net*
- *Give online to the Church's bank account at 03 0903 0016425 00 - our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318.*