



The Methodist Church In Ireland

Sunday 26th July, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like...”

This short act of worship has been prepared so that you can spend some moments with God, knowing that other people in your local congregation and beyond are sharing in this same act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

Dearest Father, we pray that you quiet our minds.
Still our hearts so that we can hear your voice and
live in you. Strengthen our lives and inspire our spirits
so that we can feel your living waters flow.

Through your endless grace, may we come to know
and serve you better.

Hymn: Give me joy in my heart.

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful song

1 Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
Give me joy in my heart, I pray;
Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
Keep me praising till the break of day

*Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King of kings.
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King.*

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Give me peace in my heart, I pray;
Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Keep me loving till the break of day:

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna.....

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
Give me love in my heart, I pray;
Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
Keep me serving till the break of day:

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna...

Genesis 29: 15-28

¹⁵ Laban said to him, “Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.”

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had weak^[a] eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”

¹⁹ Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.” ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.”

²² So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. ²³ But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. ²⁴ And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

²⁵ When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

²⁶ Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. ²⁷ Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

²⁸ And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

Let us pray

Dear Heavenly Father, we lower our heads before you and we confess that we have too often forgotten that we are yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to You. For these things we ask your forgiveness and we also ask for your strength.

Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to You in our world. Remind us to be who You would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us to You and build our relationship with You and with those You have given us on earth.

Romans 8: 26-39

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who ^[a] have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

More Than Conquerors

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who

condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”^[b]

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, ^[c] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

³¹ He told them 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^[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

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.

The Parable of the Net

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.”

Reflection

How would you describe the wind or love? One could say the wind is like a feather’s touch or love is a journey. These literary devices are effective ways for giving colour, life, and meaning to concepts that would otherwise be difficult to understand.

However, the tools are only effective if the person who hears them understands the references used. If I have never felt the touch of a feather I cannot know how the wind felt. Likewise, if I have never been on a journey, the comparison doesn’t help me better understand love. While the descriptions get us closer to the meaning, it is not the same as experiencing it. Specifically, it is the difference between knowing *about* something and actually knowing something. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to several concepts in order to enhance the crowd’s understanding of his teaching.

Jesus ends his teaching in Matthew 13 by creating a more descriptive explanation of the kingdom of heaven. He explains it in five brief parables. After two detailed parables about the sower and seed and weeds, it is as if someone said to Jesus: “Tell us more about the kingdom of heaven? How would you

describe it”? Jesus concludes his message to the crowd by saying the kingdom of heaven is like: a mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, a merchant who searches for and finds fine pearls, and finally a net. Each of these short descriptions expands our understanding of God’s kingdom.

These five parables have taught us more about the kingdom of heaven. While the parables about the sower and seeds and the weeds may have appealed to the farmers in the crowd, these parables would have been meaningful to fishermen, bakers, and merchants. Their wide appeal would have helped the crowd to have a better understanding of the kingdom of heaven. We must seek the kingdom of heaven in order to find it and when we find it, we have found a treasure. This treasure will bring joy that empowers us to rise above life’s difficult circumstances. We experience the kingdom of God in community -- all are welcome at the table. The more we are taught, by the trained scribes, the more we will grow and become witnesses of God’s kingdom here on earth.

Respond/Reflect

Take some time to reflect and respond. What joy we feel being part of the Kingdom of God. Every day we need to seek it and see it in our everyday living. How can we do that more intentionally?

A time of Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank You for this beautiful day. Thank You for our families and our friends! We praise You, Lord! Among all that we have, there are so many hurting and needy people. We lift them up to You and ask that You would bless them, help them, heal them.

May Your peace fill their hearts and may joy shine! We ask that You intercede for them, fulfilling their needs according to Your will. We also pray that You would use us to help them in any way we can. Open our eyes and make us aware of the opportunities we have to bless others in need. Help us to not be selfish, help us to share.

All that we have is Yours and we surrender to You. May Your will be done in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father.....

Hymn: Hear the call of the Kingdom

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful hymn

Hear the call of the kingdom
Lift your eyes to the King
Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God rich in mercy
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven
The humility of Christ
Walking justly before Him
Loving all that is right
That the life of Christ may shine through us

*King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name*

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in Him

King of Heaven we will answer the call...

Keith and Kristyn Getty

A prayer of Blessing

The Kingdom of God is described in so many ways, may we each find our own unique way and language to describe our personal experience of His Kingdom. **Amen.**

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