

TCC Takeout

An Order of Service for Worship at Home

God's Extravagant Welcome:

“No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, YOU are welcome here!”

July 26, 2020

Eighth Sunday of Pentecost



CALL TO WORSHIP

Almighty God, we come before you to know where you are, to know your heaven.

And you say to us, the kin-dom of heaven is like:

A tiny mustard seed that carries the life of a tree.

The kin-dom of heaven is like:

A tiny portion of yeast that makes bread rise.

The kin-dom of heaven is like:

**A tiny pearl of great price
that we would give all our “stuff” to have.**

The kin-dom of heaven is like:

**A fishing boat filled with catch—good and bad together—
With fisherfolk wise to recognize the good.**

Loving God of justice, we worship you.

Today and always. Amen.

OPENING HYMN [You Are The Seed](#)

GATHERING PRAYER

Holy One,
you call us to find your kin-dom
already hidden in our world—
in tiny, transforming possibilities;
in beauty that calls us to surrender all;
in complicated choices that call for wisdom.
Reveal yourself here in this moment
And heighten our senses that we may find you
And join you in building this kin-dom of love, and hope, and peace.
In the name of the One who calls us to seek,
Jesus, the Christ. **Amen.**

GLORIA PATRI ([Audio Version](#))

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning,
Is now and ever shall be,
World without end,
Amen, Amen.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

Psalm 105:1-11¹O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.²Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.³Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.⁴Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually.⁵Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,⁶O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.⁷He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.⁸He is mindful of his covenant forever, of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,⁹the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac,¹⁰which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant,¹¹saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.”

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52³¹He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³²it 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.” ³³He 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.”

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; ⁴⁶on 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; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and 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.” ⁵²And 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.”

REFLECTION

One of the things I appreciate the most about the summer is the long, lazy days that allow me the chance to read and read and read! I just finished Sue Monk Kidd’s recent novel, *The Book of Longings*, which I highly recommend. While it is clearly fiction, the book deals with the life of Jesus and his family members, and reverentially portrays Jesus’ humanity. Jesus talks radically, in the plot of the book, about the kingdom of heaven. Of course, I did not need this novel to tell me that the coming of God’s Kingdom is a main message of Jesus. Yet, I appreciated how the book presented this idea as emanating from an ordinary, sincere man who genuinely wanted goodness for the people around him he loved so much. In the book, it was Jesus’ humanity, shown through his relationships, that allowed him to welcome divinity into his heart and to pray that for others, too.

Just as the title of Sue Monk Kidd’s book suggests, the kingdom of heaven has always been a longing for people. I imagine you, too, have thought about heaven from time to time. Growing up, I absorbed the idea that heaven is this grandiose, beautiful place that some people go to after death. The notion of heaven that I took in was of an actual, physical place that was not available now while we are alive. Since I understood heaven as a place where good, or ‘saved’ people went, there was also a tinge of fear associated with this understanding; what if I didn’t get in? How have you thought about heaven?

The kingdom of heaven has always been a source of wonder to people. We ask, *where is it, and what is it like? Can we stay there?* Today’s passage from Matthew addresses these questions as do other parables, like the Parable of the Sower we discussed a couple of weeks ago.

As I imagine Jesus speaking about the kingdom of heaven to the crowd gathered before him, I appreciate his teacherliness. Jesus is student-centered; what he speaks of focuses on the concerns and realities of those who are listening to him. Jesus does not talk about the kingdom of heaven using sophisticated philosophy and complicated language. Jesus’ explanation of the kingdom of heaven is accessible to all those before him who are curious. He draws from the

crowds' own regular experiences to illustrate the truths he wants to impart. In this portion of chapter 13, Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven in three ordinary ways.

Firstly, in verses 31 to 33, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to the mundane examples of mustard and yeast, two ingredients that would have been commonly found in any household. Mustard and yeast were the things of women's lives. By speaking of them, Jesus was shining light on the presence of women and their labor. He was valuing these domestic ingredients and connecting them to the kingdom of heaven! Yes, these two examples were ordinary and small; mustard seeds and yeast. But Jesus says that in their ordinariness is great divine potential; the kingdom of heaven is like this! The ordinary and small and unvalued by society, like the work of women, is precisely where heaven grows, Jesus declares. How liberating and inviting to think of the kingdom of heaven in this way!

Secondly, the two examples about the kingdom of heaven in verses 44 to 46 speak of the kingdom as of such value, whether as hidden treasure or pearl, that it is worth risking all one has to obtain it. Not only is the kingdom of heaven to be found in ordinary and small places, but it is so precious that having it takes priority over all else, Jesus says. Even taking the risk to find the kingdom of God is no longer a worry because of the reward it will yield. The kingdom of heaven is this special, Jesus assures.

Finally, in verses 47 through 52, Jesus speaks about the kingdom of heaven as like a net that catches all kinds of fish. The kingdom of heaven then is welcoming of all people; it is an inclusive place that does not discriminate based on type, appearance or origin. No, the kingdom of heaven embraces and holds all. But, the kingdom of heaven is also a place of justice because those who refuse God by following evil, or those who do not walk in God's ways will not be able to stay. All can enter, but not all will remain. The kingdom of heaven then is a place of justice, Jesus challenges.

The kingdom of heaven: *where is it, and what is it like? Can we stay there?*

Where is it? Jesus doesn't answer this location question directly, but instead teaches that it's worth risking all one has to find it, and that the persistent ones will find it! So this must mean that the journey in search of heaven is what is important for us. Whom we meet along the way and how we share what we have, might open the road for us as we continue to discern the direction to heaven. So, it seems Jesus is talking about heaven as a reality that is available to us here and now in this lifetime! *What is the kingdom of heaven like?* Instead of painting a picture of heaven as luxurious and glittery, Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven may appear small in size and ordinary in quality, and may look like something you see everyday! So open your eyes, he says, for the potential of all regular life around you is great! *Can we stay there?* Well, Jesus wants to be clear; the kingdom of heaven is open to everyone, but it is not just a fuzzy, feel good, free-for-all place! No, it is a place that is clearly defined by God's justice and righteousness, and to stay in heaven means that we welcome these definitions.

So, let us ask ourselves, are we in search of the kingdom of heaven now, because we can be, just like we have seen trees grow from seed in our lifetimes and we have enjoyed leavened bread almost daily. Just as we can search for hidden treasure now, we can search for the kingdom of heaven now! And, let us pay attention to our journey and those that walk the path with us. Those who also yearn for God's kingdom are the community that will sustain us as we travel toward it. Search the faces of the Trinitarian Congregational Church; this is a community seeking God's kingdom. Are we in search of the kingdom of heaven? Then, let us value even the ordinary and small aspects of our lives, even the routine emails and the regular greetings we share, for they may be the place that God's glory can flourish. And are we ready to live in God's kingdom for always? Then, let us walk in the ways of God's justice and make holy the place God dwells.

Today's message is simple; the kingdom of heaven is among us, but we will know this, if we value all the everyday things in our lives and if we commit to the search, despite the risk. And, we will know the kingdom of heaven is among us if we have helped to pave the way for justice.

So, I will say, in our world today, we are not quite there yet. We haven't quite yet arrived at the kingdom of heaven; we know of the ills of society and the many ways people continue to harm each other. We know our planet is hurting because of human activity. We know, unfortunately, that suffering is all too common in our world. So, no, we are not quite there yet with God's Kingdom on earth.

But, our longing is strong and propels us forward. Indeed, we are on the journey, a journey that has the potential to transform us and to save us. Even if our longing is the size of a mustard seed, it will grow -- our longing will grow! And we will become a great tree where others shall come for rest and healing. Friends, the kingdom of heaven grows in us! And this is what Jesus dreams for; that the potential for goodness and justice may be unleashed in us for the purpose of blessing others.

In fact, Jesus risked all he had, his very life, that this might be.
Amen.

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION [Seek Ye First The Kingdom of God](#)

JOYS AND CONCERNS

As you take this moment to be in prayer, you may refer to the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast.

God hears all of our prayers, both those we give words to and say aloud, and those that remain silent in our hearts.

Prayer is always available to us.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Loving God, we come before you today in prayer. We yearn to know your presence; we long to see you and dwell in your kingdom.

Merciful God, grant us the wisdom to know the value of our ordinary lives to illumine your peace and justice. Almighty

God, empower us with the courage to love our neighbors as ourselves and to help bring about your kingdom of heaven on earth. Forgive us Lord when we fall short of this your desire for us. And help us to forgive one another that we might know we are all one in you.

Today, O God, we pray for our family members and friends.

We pray for our communities, both physical and virtual communities, that they may be places that nourish the mustard seeds of heaven.

We pray for this world that we might soon find a way out of this pandemic, that we might learn to live with one another peacefully, and that we might learn to better care for this planet.

Today, dear Lord, we pray with gratitude and sincerity. And we know that this is the day that you have made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!

In Christ's name, we pray.
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us join together in the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to say ~

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE ([Audio version](#))

Hear Our Prayer, O God,
Hear our prayer, O God,
Incline Thine ear to us,
And Grant us your peace.

PASTORAL BENEDECTION

Go forth in Wisdom, in Hope, in Courage
With hearts open to recognize the signs of the reign of God in our midst,
and courage to create more space for grace in our lives and our world.
Amen.

CHORAL POSTLUDE [How Can I Keep From Singing](#)

Go in peace to serve God and your neighbor in love.

*Liturgy from ucc.org Worship Ways.