



Morning Worship

4 October 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Morning Worship here at the Parish churches of Coxley with Godney, Henton, and Wookey. Although we are currently apart due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) it is hoped that following this liturgy knowing that others in the benefice will be doing so at the same time might help provide a spiritual connection between us.

It is suggested that alongside this liturgy you have a means to listen to the suggested hymns which have links to videos with lyrics within this document. There is a mixture of traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs. If you do not know the tune then why not listen to the hymn/song and worship through reading the words alone.

The service is designed to be used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either one can lead with others joining in with the responses in **bold** OR everyone present may join in with all the words.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

Materials in this booklet are drawn from *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* which is copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2006; *New Patterns for Worship* copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2002. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version.

MORNING WORSHIP

GREETING

Praise God! For even though we are apart the Lord is in our midst!

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Though we find ourselves isolated
in homes, apartments, and residential places,
**we look out our windows and remember,
the heavens declare the glory of God,
all creation rejoices in our creator.**

Psalm 19:1

Though we cannot reach out and touch
our friends and neighbours,
**we rejoice that Christ is in our midst,
he is with us always, until the end of the age!**

Matthew 28:20

Though we have to stand at a safe distance from others,
giving space to those who pass us by,
**we recall we are all made in the image of God,
connected to one another,
connected to God.**

Genesis 1:27

HYMN: BLESSED ASSURANCE

[Listen here](#)

CONFESSION AND WORDS OF COMFORT

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world
and knows our every word and deed.
Let us then open ourselves to the Lord
and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

**Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.
We are not worthy to be called your children.
We turn to you again.
Have mercy on us,
bring us back to yourself as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

A period of silent reflection follows

Hear the words of comfort, our Saviour Christ says to all who truly
turn to him:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

COLLECT

Let us pray.

A period of silent prayer is kept.

Gracious God,
you call us to fullness of life:
deliver us from unbelief
and banish our anxieties
with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

HYMN: THE HEART OF WORSHIP

[Listen here.](#)

THE WORD OF GOD

Hear what God is saying to his people according to Matthew.

21 ³³ “Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence round it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴ When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than at first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹ They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvellous in our eyes’?

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

THE SERMON

By Revd Guy

In our small groups this week we started a series of eight videos called 'The Bible Course.' It's a great opportunity to dig deeper into the Bible and to learn the big story that God is writing from Genesis to Revelation so that when the Lectionary produces a reading from an obscure Old Testament book you know where it fits with the larger story of Scripture. It's a really useful course and if you've not signed up then there is still time to join in, just get in touch with me and I can get you signed up.

The course has this beautiful wooden timeline representing the story of the Bible and at the beginning and the end there are two trees. The first represents the tree of life at the beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis and the second represents the tree of life from the book of Revelation. This one tree creates bookends to show how we came from perfection, that is, eternal life with God, and perfection is also where we are heading. So often in the Bible the New Testament refers back to the Old Testament or the Old Testament foretells the events of the New Testament, it truly is quite remarkable how interconnected the Bible is.

THREE PARABLES

Well the same is true with the parable that Jesus told in today's Gospel reading. This parable comes the day after Jesus has thrown out the money changers from the Temple in Jerusalem in what the Bible refers to as 'the cleansing of the Temple.' It is part of a series of three parables that Jesus uses to criticise the Jewish priests and leaders. In the first parable Jesus accuses the religious leaders of hypocrisy and disobedience to God's ways and tells them that tax collectors and prostitutes, the lowest in society, will 'go into the Kingdom of God' before the religious leaders. In the third parable the Jewish leaders are identified with those who have rejected God's invitation and persecuted God's prophets and messengers. Then, instead of the religious leaders, God will invite

anyone and everyone to come and join him.

A VINEYARD AND A STONE

That leaves us with the second parable, our reading today. The text is split into two connected sections, one about a vineyard, the other about the stone of a building. In the first section of the parable we read about tenants looking after a vineyard and the landowner sending servants after servants and even his son to collect his share of the grape harvest only for all the landowners representatives to be killed.

Who the characters are is clear to see when we recognise that the story connects to the words of the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 5:1-7 there is a comparison between a vineyard and the people of Israel and Judah with God as the owner of the vineyard. Here in Matthew's Gospel the vineyard also represents God's people and the tenants the religious leaders - those who were supposed to look after and nurture the faith of Israel and Judah. Once we know this then the allusion to the persecution of John the Baptist and other prophets by the religious leaders is clear to see in the killing of the landowners servants, and for us as Christians, we can also see Jesus proclaiming his own death, (which will come in a matter of days), through the reference to the tenants killing the landowners son. That one text from Isaiah helps us to understand what the parable meant for those who heard Jesus tell it.

What was the response of the landowner to these deplorable events? Well, we do not hear from Jesus what it is but the situation was common enough in the culture Jesus was a part of for the crowd to respond. After the patience of the landowner sending two groups of servants and his son, verse 41 reveals the consequences of ignoring God's messengers all too clearly: 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons' (Mt. 21:41). Jesus is telling the religious leaders in no uncertain terms that what had been entrusted to them will be taken away and given to people that produce the fruits of the reign of God.

To make the point even clearer though, Jesus continues by talking about 'the stone that the builders rejected', another reference to the Old Testament this time from Psalm 118. Jesus is proclaiming the same message he did in his previous parable and will do again in his third parable, that the kingdom of God does not belong to the religious or political elite, but to anyone who accepts the invitation to believe in Jesus Christ and acts in the manner of God's kingdom.

GOD'S KINGDOM

It is clear from this parable that Jesus is accusing the Jewish leaders of killing God's messengers and foretelling their role in the death of God's Son and therefore God's rejection of them, but we need to be careful not to fall into anti-Semitic thinking. We must remember that the vineyard represents the God's people and the tenants the religious leaders. God is not replacing his people, only their leaders and the corrupt institution they have established. God replaces them by widening his grace to all people, Jew and Gentile, and establishing his kingdom community, the Church.

But just as the landowner had expectations of his original tenants there is an expectation on his new tenants, an expectation on all of us. Now, you may be thinking, hang on a second, the corrupt tenants represented the religious leaders, surely the new tenants represent the leaders of the Church, why is the expectation on me - it's your job as the vicar to nurture me, to help me bear fruit for God's kingdom?! Well that's kind of true, I am here to help you all to bear fruit for God's kingdom, to encourage you to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to help you grow in your faith and in your relationship with God, and to lead you in acts of loving service here in our communities as witnesses to God's love for all people. But unfortunately that responsibility is not solely mine - it is also the responsibility of everyone here.

LIVING FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

You see, when Jesus died and rose from the dead so that all

people could receive the gift of eternal life he established a new order, a new way of doing things. No longer was there a need for priests and religious leaders to offer up sacrifices on behalf of the people because Jesus was the ultimate High Priest and the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus had removed the old way of doing things so that each person can boldly approach God by themselves. This means, to use the images from the parable we have read today, that Christians are both vineyard and tenant, those who are nurtured and those who nurture. Christ has made it so that we can all be a part of the vineyard, all be God's people; but he also commissions each of us, (Mt. 28:16-20), call each of us to love our neighbour (Mt. 7:12), and in the Beatitudes sets out a way of life for his people to live by (Mt. 5:1-12). Paul in his letter to the Colossians reminds us that we are all expected to bear fruit (Col. 1:9-12), to be witnesses to God's kingdom here on earth.

We are all invited to be a part of God's kingdom and receive the gift of eternal life - that is the good news of the gospel! But to accept this gift means to reject the ways of this world and to live according to the ways of God's kingdom. To accept the grace offered to us by God through Jesus Christ and to not live according to the ways of God's kingdom would make us similar to the tenant farmers, trying to hold onto all the good things that God has given us without offering anything in way of thanks.

So let us be those who nurture the faith of God's people, who encourage one another in good works and in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and who too are also nurtured by others so that in all things we can be God's kingdom people living under the God's rule and receiving God's blessing.

Amen.

HYMN: GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

[Listen here.](#)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

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.**

INTERCESSIONS

Use the silence between each prayer to bring before God your own concerns around that topic.

Jesus, our exalted Lord, has been given all authority.
Let us seek his intercession that our prayers may be perfected
by his prayer.

Jesus Christ, great high priest,
living for ever to intercede for us,
pray for the Church and its leaders, your broken body in the world...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, King of righteousness,
enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high,
pray for the world and its leaders, and make it subject to your gentle rule...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Son of Man,
drawing humanity into the life of God,
pray for your sisters and brothers in need, distress, or sorrow...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus, pioneer of our salvation,
bringing us to glory through your death and resurrection,
surround with your saints and angels
those who have died trusting your promises...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Lord over all things,
ascended far above the heavens and filling the universe,
pray for us who receive the gifts you give us for work in your service...

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ,
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at your feet;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

HYMN: BE THOU MY VISION

[Listen here.](#)

DISMISSAL

*'Remember, I am with you
to the end of the age,' says the Lord.*

Matthew 28.20

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, evermore. Amen.

With the risen life of Christ within us,
we go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!