

Worship at Home Sunday 31st July 2022

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
As we prepare to meet with you,
help us to be aware of your presence this day.
As we bring you our worship
and offer you our praise
Draw near to us now
as we draw near to you.

Amen

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/FLsGGPFsufQ>

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee ;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail
not ;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be :

Great is thy faithfulness !

Great is thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see ;

all I have needed thy hand hath provided.

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love :

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide ;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside !

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)

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number 51

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Prayers

Just and merciful God,
we glimpse your presence in the world you have
created, its power and beauty, its music and
poetry, its diversity and fertility.

We praise and adore you in the knowledge that
that you are with us in this world.

Thank you that we live and move and have our
being in you. Yet always amid creation's glory, we
see sin's shadow and feel death's darkness.
It is around us in the earth, sea, and sky, in the
abuse of matter. It is beside us in the broken, the
hungry and the poor, in the betrayal of one
another, and often deep within us, in a striving
against your Spirit.

Forgive us that we may forgive one another, help
us that we may become people of healing, and
renew us that we may be makers of peace.

In Christ's name we pray,

Amen.

Read Hosea 11 v1-11

Read Luke 12 v13-21

Reflection

If you've ever been tempted to believe that the
Old Testament is mainly concerned with justice
and the New Testament with grace and mercy,
then today's passage from the book of the
prophet Hosea provides an invitation to think
again.

The first eleven verses of Hosea chapter 11
provide a poignant depiction of the agony of God
torn between the demands of judgement and of
grace. Here the images of both parent and spouse
are used to emphasize the depth of the love of
God, a love that is continually spurned by a sinful
people.

God's love is so deep, so complete, that to arrive at the point of destroying Israel finally and irredeemably would violate God's very nature. Here we see justice and grace weighed in God's balances and it is grace which prevails.

The Gospel passage for today invites us to consider how followers of Jesus are to deny the temptations of materialism whilst living in a very material world. In the words of the singer/songwriter Madonna, *'the boy with the cold hard cash is always Mister Right 'cause we are living in a material world, and I am a material girl''*

The parable Jesus tells seems to be so clear in its message that it needs little comment. Jesus is pointing out here the error of falsely trusting in material possessions to provide human security. Yet, there is something about our human nature that seems to make it so difficult for us to let go of wealth and of material things. Why is that I wonder?

This Gospel passage is a difficult one to address because money is one of those things we're not supposed to bring up in polite company. We feel awkward and embarrassed particularly when we are asked about it in ways that may challenge our lifestyles and our priorities. For all sorts of reasons, we prefer to talk about Christian virtues that are safely abstract — faith, hope, love, joy. This passage, however, is one which forces us to address such things as our bank balances, retirement plans, shopping habits, tithes, and offerings. It seems Jesus isn't particularly bothered about our middle-class sensibilities.

A man approaches Jesus and asks him to settle a dispute he's having with his brother. He says to Jesus, *'tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me'*. Luke gives us no context other than this straightforward and seemingly reasonable request. The man clearly wants a just and fair outcome to the dispute. Jesus, however, responds as follows, *'take care! Be on your guard*

against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions'

I find that difficult. Surely desiring fairness is not the same as being greedy. What is Jesus really meaning in saying this? Well, he continues to explain what he means by telling a parable about a rich landowner who diligently stores his wealth ahead of his retirement only to learn that his life is about to end. My inclination is to say, *'poor chap, that's really tough'*. God says, *'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'*

Do we, like the man in the parable, tend to think we are entitled to do what we like with our own hard-earned cash? Are we tempted to forget all too easily that everything we have comes from God?

When you read verses 17, 18 and 19 of the passage, it's noticeable that the man in the parable is rather self-obsessed. *'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, and be merry.'* He's clearly oblivious to his own mortality and full of his own importance. He's a self-made man. What's wrong with that?!

The problem is, the rich landowner is so concerned about possible scarcity that he is incapable of noticing abundance. He's so focused on his own economic affairs that he fails to recognise the salvation that Jesus offers. A fool indeed.

Jesus instructs his followers not to store up material riches but instead to be rich towards God. The passage continues with Jesus instructing them not to worry about what they will eat and wear but to trust in God to provide. The basic premise is that God provides plenty for all. God is

a God of abundance. Scarcity is a result of human sin. Storing up wealth in the way the rich landowner does here is ultimately selfish. It's an extremely challenging message for those of us who live in one of the wealthiest parts of the world.

So, what exactly does it mean to be rich towards God?

I wonder if perhaps it means spending time with God in prayer, nurturing our relationship with God. I wonder if it means looking beyond the needs of ourselves and our families to the needs of others. I wonder if it means speaking out when government policies favour the wealthy and entitled and ignore the needs of the poor.

There is certainly plenty in both of today's Bible passages for us to ponder this coming week.

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/FHMt3YJHbZE>

Heaven shall not wait
for the poor to lose their patience,
the scorned to smile, the despised to find a
friend :

Jesus is Lord ;
he has championed the unwanted ;
in him injustice confronts its timely end.

Heaven shall not wait
for the rich to share their fortunes,
the proud to fall, the élite to tend the least :
Jesus is Lord ;
he has shown the master's privilege —
to kneel and wash servants' feet before they
feast.

Heaven shall not wait
for the dawn of great ideas,
thoughts of compassion divorced from cries of
pain :
Jesus is Lord ;

he has married word and action ;
his cross and company make his purpose plain.

Heaven shall not wait
for triumphant Hallelujahs,
when earth has passed and we reach another
shore :

Jesus is Lord
in our present imperfection ;
his power and love are for now, and then for
evermore.

John L. Bell (*b.* 1949) and Graham Maule (*b.* 1958)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition,
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Words and Music: From *Heaven Shall Not Wait* © 1987, WGRG,
Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland. <www.wgrg.co.uk>

Intercessions

Holy God,
who, in Jesus, touched the earth,
admiring its beauty and blessing its people,
we honour you for the gift of life
and all the gifts that life brings us:
food, shelter, company,
the experiences that make us think,
the people that bring out the best in us.

Hear our prayers for the places in this world
where beauty has turned to ugliness,
food has been replaced by famine;
friendship has been forgotten
and fear, hostility, and hopelessness
have the upper hand.

God, in your mercy
bring healing, bring peace

Hear our prayers for people who cannot pray
because of pain, loss or worry;
and for those who will not love themselves
and so cannot love their neighbour.

God, in your mercy
bring healing, bring peace

Hear our prayers for ourselves-
our private yearnings,
our secret hopes
and any doubt, jealousy, or anger
to which we hold too tightly.

God, in your mercy
bring healing, bring peace

The Lord's Prayer

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

If you give your weekly offering through an envelope scheme or in cash, please set it aside, and pray with those who give using Standing orders.

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

John Harvey, Wild Goose Publications, the Iona Community

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/x3jtklzbApA>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art ;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord ;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be ;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight ;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true
might ;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong
tower :
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise :
be thou mine inheritance now and always ;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart :
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won ;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century
translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)
versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935) (alt.)

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Closing Prayer

The light of God to lead us
The power of God to hold us
The joy of God to heal us
The grace of God to caress us
The love of God to bless us
Amen.

* * * * *

Service prepared by the Revd Ruth Fry

Resources used:
Prayers adapted and taken from Iona Abbey Worship Book, the Iona Community, wild goose publications 2016
Texts for preaching, a lectionary commentary based on the NRSV-Year C.
<https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2291-rich-toward-god>

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