



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 4th October 2026

Compiled by Vicki Penfound - Lay Assistant

Opening words:

Psalm 19 v 1 – 4

*The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.*

Hymn: 560 Mission Praise

1] Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like thee his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

2] Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress;
praise him, still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

3] Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows.

4] Angels in the height, adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

Prayer:

O Lord our God,
The songs of praise on our lips are matched
By the songs of praise in our hearts.
You are the King of Heaven and you
Tenderly care for each one of us.
Hold us close that we may hear the whisper of
Your Spirit
Teach us more of your ways and help us to grow
Into the likeness of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: 93 Mission Praise

1] Come, let us join our cheerful songs
with angels round the throne;
ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
but all their joys are one.

2] 'Worthy the Lamb that died,' they cry,
'to be exalted thus.'
'Worthy the Lamb,' our lips reply,
'for he was slain for us.'

3] Jesus is worthy to receive
honour and power divine;
and blessings, more than we can give,
be, Lord, forever thine.

4] The whole creation joins in one
to bless the sacred name
of him that sits up on the throne,
and to adore the Lamb.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Reading: Matthew 21 v 33 - 46

'Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." So, they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at harvest time.'

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 amazing in our eyes"?

Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Reflection:

In telling this parable, Jesus is referring to the imagery in Isaiah chapter 5, the “Song of the vineyard”, where Israel is the vineyard, cared for by the Lord. The best vines, fertile ground and a watchtower so that it can be protected. However, it didn’t bring any good fruit. Isaiah concludes: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.”

Years later, Jesus is taking that song a step further and clearly is identifying as the son of the vineyard owner. Matthew tells us that Jesus is speaking this parable in the temple courts to the priests and elders there. It is the second day of Holy Week, Jesus had arrived on the back of a donkey to crowds shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David”, a cry of recognition that he is Messiah. He then went to the temple and caused mayhem as he drove out the money changers and dove sellers. The following day he is back again and the priests and elders are asking where his authority is from. The parable of the tenants is the second of three parables Jesus answers their question with. The first is the two sons, the third is the wedding banquet. All drive home the point that the people God wanted to show his character through, have not. Instead of love and liberty, there is oppression and greed.

The priests listening were very aware of the point being made. They did not want to hear the truth as they were turning a blind eye to the exploitation in their midst. Indeed, they were profiting from the rules imposed upon the people. The fence around the vineyard was the Torah, but they had added extra rules to scripture and it was a huge burden to the people.

The wicked tenants in the parable killed the servants, who represent the prophets sent by God over the years. Then they took the son outside the vineyard and killed him. It would be four short days later that Jesus would be crucified outside the city wall at the place of the skull. A roman death, outside Jewish culture. Thoroughly rejected.

We are living in an age where the cries of the oppressed are deafening. Messengers tell us what is going on around the world, and in our own back yard, so to speak. Do we ignore them? Or try to silence the messengers? There are many examples of people who have paid the ultimate price for telling the truth. Oscar Romero was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977; he became known for defending the poor and denouncing human rights abuses. His message was not wanted by the regime or the guerilla fighters at that time, and he was assassinated while he was celebrating mass in 1980. His words are still relevant today. *“For the church, the many abuses of human life, liberty, and dignity are a heartfelt suffering. The church, entrusted with the earth’s glory, believes that in each person is the Creator’s image and that everyone who tramples it offends God. As holy defender of God’s rights and of his images, the church must cry out. It takes as spittle in its face, as lashes on its back, as the cross in its passion, all that human beings suffer, even though they be unbelievers. They suffer as God’s images. There is no dichotomy between man and God’s image. Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being abuses God’s image, and the church takes as its own that cross, that martyrdom.”*

It is easy sometimes to criticise others who speak out – or fail to speak out on the suffering of humanity. The question we must ask and answer honestly before God, is what are using our voices for? Are we producing good fruit or hiding behind fences of religious observance while injustice and oppression go unchecked? All of us can do something, as the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, *“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”*

Let us pray:

Loving God,

It is overwhelming to hear the voices of suffering humanity.

We don't know how to pray, words are not adequate,

We feel helpless and afraid at what is happening in this world.

We pray for peace, for justice, for freedom for all people everywhere.

Challenge us, Lord, to speak for you in our conversations,

To use our resources to help others,

To demonstrate your love in our lives.

We want to follow Christ our Saviour, even though he leads us

In paths that may be difficult.

Help us to pick up our crosses and follow him,

Proclaiming the Kingdom of God as we go. Amen

Hymn: 436 Mission Praise

1] Lord make me a mountain standing tall for You,

Lord make me a fountain of water clear and new.

Lord make me a river of water pure and sweet,

Lord make me the servant of everyone I meet.

2] Lord make me a candle shining with Your light,

Steadfastly unflickering standing for the right.

Lord make me a fire burning strong for You,

Lord make me be humble in everything I do.

3] Lord make me a mountain standing tall for You,

Strong and free and holy in everything I do,

Lord make me a shepherd that I may feed Your sheep,

Lord make me the servant of everyone I meet.

Paul Field (b.1961)

Blessing:

May the Lord of love keep us all in peace,

Transform our conflict into the beauty of his grace,

And give us joyful hearts to do his will.

In the name of the Father, and the Son,

And the Holy Spirit. Amen