



**Call:** (Ps 24:1) The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.

**Hymn:** STF 51 Great is thy faithfulness

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 spring-time and  
harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.  
*Chorus*

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!  
*Chorus*

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**Prayer of Praise:** (based on Ps 8) O Lord my God how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens, your hands have made the moon and stars and  
placed them in the night sky. You created man and woman, and you love them. You gave them the  
privilege and responsibility for caring for all of your creation, the flocks and herds, the beasts of the  
fields, the birds of the air and the fish in the sea.  
O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! AMEN

**Prayer of Confession:** Redeemer God, we confess that we have not loved this world as you have.  
We are sorry for the destruction we have caused, for the many of your beloved species that are no  
more because we wanted more, for the many lives that are lost each year to starvation while we  
have more than enough.  
Sustainer God, we confess that we have not cared for this planet as you do. We take and do not  
replace, depleting the earth of precious resources. We use and then dump, creating wastelands of  
junk. We create chemicals for our own convenience that destroy the natural balance of life,  
upsetting the cycles that you have created. We value our own lives and our own comfort but care  
nothing for the earth or other people who are suffering.

Merciful God, we come before you, humbled by the parts we play in destroying your creation. Hear  
the cries of our guilt and see the willingness to change in our hearts. Forgive us we pray, Sustainer  
God. AMEN

**Reading:** Mark 4:26-34

**Hymn:** STF 123 Come ye thankful people come

1 Come, you thankful people, come,  
raise the song of harvest home!  
Fruit and crops are gathered in  
safe before the storms begin:  
God our maker will provide  
for our needs to be supplied;  
come with all his people, come,  
raise the song of harvest home!

2 All the world is God's own field,  
harvests for his praise to yield;  
wheat and weeds together sown,  
unto joy or sorrow grown:  
first the blade and then the ear,  
then the full corn shall appear-  
Lord of harvest, grant that we  
wholesome grain and pure may be.

3 For the Lord our God shall come  
and shall bring his harvest home;  
he himself on that great day,  
worthless things shall take away,  
give his angels charge at last  
in the fire the weeds to cast,  
but the fruitful ears to store  
in his care for evermore.

4 Even so, Lord, quickly come-  
bring your final harvest home!  
Gather all your people in  
free from sorrow, free from sin,  
there together purified,  
ever thankful at your side-  
come, with all your angels, come,  
bring that glorious harvest home!

Henry Alford.

**Message:**

“Kingdom harvest”

I was preparing this Service having watched the Proclamation of King Charles III on the TV. It was fascinating and full of ceremony and ancient tradition, some of it dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. None of us will have witnessed this before.

Although the Proclamation of Queen Elizabeth was recorded on film in 1952, the first part of the ceremony at St James Palace with members of the Privy Council has always been done behind closed doors. There were various oaths and treaties to be sworn and signed, about where and when and how the Proclamation should be declared. This is of course because previous monarchs have not had the benefit of live TV, social media and the ubiquitous mobile phone cameras, and so had to declare the Proclamation throughout the monarchy.

It was slightly incongruous to watch as several men and one woman stepped out onto the balcony at St James Palace in gold tapestry costume and plumed feathered hats to the sound of the household trumpeters with onlookers in the foreground all craning to see with outstretched arms clutching a mobile phone to record the occasion.

We are seeing the heralding of a new kingdom amidst pageantry, tradition and ceremony.

In our bible reading today Jesus heralds the coming of the Kingdom of God, and he uses not pomp and pageantry, rather two parables that spoke straight to his audience of country folk, men and women who made their living from the land.

What is the Kingdom of God like?

Jesus starts from the point of a seed. The farmer has to sow the seed. This seed then appears to lay inert, covered over with soil, watered by rain from the skies, and warmed by the heat of the sun. After what sometimes seems a very long time a seedling emerges from the ground and imperceptibly grows into a mature plant that produces a head of grain, containing the very seeds that started the whole chain of events.

There is no proclamation, no pageantry, no trumpet call. It just happens, whether we are asleep or awake. The Accession ceremony of King Charles will have been planned for months if not years, and was carefully choreographed taking into account the fact that it would be watched by millions, if not billions of people.

The Kingdom of God happens without ceremony, without even action on our own part. We might want to help it, watering our seeds or adding fertiliser to the ground. However, I can vouch for the fact that seeds will grow irrespective of our actions.

We have a bird feeder in our back garden, and birds are very messy and perhaps rather fussy eaters. It's very amusing watching them toss aside those seeds they don't want to eat. Inevitably these seeds land on the lawn, or on a flower bed, or even on the patio paving slabs. Over the summer, despite the dry conditions we've had, these seeds sprout and if left grow to produce flowers and seed heads of their own. We've got our own heads of wheat growing in the back yard!

The fact is that we might try to manipulate the speed at which the seed grows, or its strength and productivity, but no one can understand how it grows or why, given identical conditions one seed

germinates and grows and another does not. We cannot make a seed grow, that is not within our power, but is in the power of God.

The kingdom of God is like that seed growing. We cannot see it germinate, we cannot see the seedling grow. We shut our eyes, come back to it and it has grown another inch. We can only perceive the speed at which a seedling grows by things like time-lapse photography, where days and weeks are crammed into a few seconds.

The Kingdom of God grows imperceptibly, without us seeing it. We may worry, impatiently, that we cannot see the results of the seeds of faith we have sown, but that is not for us to worry about.

The Kingdom of God is inevitable. We can sow the seeds, we can water and nourish them, but it is the power of God that brings them to fruition, not our meagre efforts.

We worry that we are not getting new people in church, we worry about the decrease of influence Christians have in the world. However there are more people turning to Christ, they may not be here on a Sunday, the Kingdom of God may look different but it is very much alive and growing. Despite our disobedience and rebelliousness, the Kingdom of God continues to flourish. Nothing can stop the purposes of God.

The Kingdom of God has been present way before any of our worldly monarchies. It never halts. It is constant. Just as the seed grows day and night, whether the farmer is awake and working in the fields or asleep, there is a continuous cycle of growth. The Kingdom of God is not spasmodic but is always there. God does not turn his love on or off as the mood takes him.

However Jesus, as he often does, adds a note of warning to his parable.

The harvest only happens when the grain is gathered in, and this involves the process of cutting the corn, then separating the good wheat from the weeds and the chaff. Judgement and harvest go together.

The farmer watches his crops, watches the weather and attempts to leave the crops long enough to ripen fully, but not too long that they are spoiled by bad weather. The farmer cannot predict ahead of time when the harvest will happen.

Even less so can we predict when God's harvest will happen.

The farmer has to have patience and so do we. We need to have patience and trust in God that the seeds that we may have grown will come to fruition and bear good fruit for the Kingdom.

Just as a farmer needs to have his farm machinery in good order to ready at the optimum time for harvest, so we need to be prepared and ready for that day when God reaps his harvest.

I love that image of the tree that provides shade. It provides protection for the birds and other animals hiding within it's branches, living together in harmony. The tree provides food and nourishment, and as we think of God's creation and our care of it, we remember the imperceptible, constant and inevitable work the trees do to help preserve God's Creation, despite our efforts to the contrary. Trees are this planets greatest asset in removing the greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

So as we thank God for the harvest this year, we remember that there is no need for pageantry and proclamations, his kingdom grows without ceremony, imperceptibly, but constantly and inevitably, from a tiny seed into a tree that provides much more than just fruit. AMEN

**Hymn:** STF 255 The kingdom of God is justice an joy

1      The kingdom of God  
Is justice and joy,  
For Jesus restores  
What sin would destroy;  
God's power and glory  
In Jesus we know,  
And here and hereafter  
The kingdom shall grow.

2      The kingdom of God  
Is mercy and grace,  
The prisoners are freed,  
The sinners find place,  
The outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share,  
And hope is awakened  
In place of despair.

3 The kingdom of God  
Is challenge and choice,  
Believe the good news,  
Repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
Brought Christ to his cross,  
Our crisis of judgement  
For gain or for loss.

4 God's kingdom is come,  
The gift and the goal,  
In Jesus begun,  
In heaven made whole;  
The heirs of the kingdom  
Shall answer his call,  
And all things cry glory  
To God all in all!

Bryn Rees (1911-1983) © Alexander Scott

**Intercessions:** Lord of all, as we thank you for our harvest we remember those who do not celebrate – those whose harvest is poor or non-existent, for farmers looking at parched earth or flooded fields, those with insufficient resources to tend their land, those denied a just reward for their labours, for those who work to grow foods for the rich yet who cannot afford to taste their own produce because prices are so high, those whose harvest has been destroyed in the chaos of war or natural disaster, we think of the wheat fields of Ukraine and the land of Pakistan decimated by flood.

Help us, as we celebrate our plenty, to remember those who have so much less- the poor and needy of our world, driven by famine, disaster or civil war to the brink of starvation. We think of the peoples of East Africa, an area which includes Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, where over 15 million people are facing a hunger crisis and the worst drought in a generation. Help us to respond with love and concern, offering whatever help we can.

Lord of all, speak to us this harvest time, so that our hearts may be stirred and our consciences moved. Teach us to share our bounty with those who have nothing, so that the time may one day come when all have enough and none too much.

Lord, you have blessed us richly, teach us to remember others, in the name of Christ who came to serve the poor and oppressed. AMEN

### Lords Prayer ...

**Hymn:** STF 124 For the fruits of all creation

1 For the fruits of all creation,  
Thanks be to God;  
For the gifts to every nation,  
Thanks be to God;  
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,  
Silent growth while we are sleeping,  
Future needs in earth's safe-keeping,  
Thanks be to God.

2 In the just reward of labour,  
God's will is done;  
In the help we give our neighbour,  
God's will is done;

In our world-wide task of caring  
For the hungry and despairing,  
In the harvests we are sharing,  
God's will is done.

3 For the harvests of the Spirit,  
Thanks be to God;  
For the good we all inherit,  
Thanks be to God;  
For the wonders that astound us,  
For the truths that still confound us,  
Most of all that love has found us,  
Thanks be to God.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000) © 1970 Stainer & Bell Ltd. 1085607

**Blessing:** May God the Father bless us, who first sowed the seed of eternal life in our hearts; may God the Son bless us, who nurtures us with the rain and sunshine of love; may God the Spirit bless us, who brings us all to fruition; and may the blessing of God be among us all now and always.

**AMEN**