



### Call to Worship – Isaiah 55: verse 10

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

### Hymn – STF 403 – God is love: his the care,

Watch on YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjju\\_BKA1PE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjju_BKA1PE)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1 God is love : his the care,<br/>tending each, everywhere.<br/>God is love — all is there !<br/>Jesus came to show him,<br/>that we all might know him :<br/><i>Sing aloud, loud, loud !</i><br/><i>Sing aloud, loud, loud !</i><br/><i>God is good !</i><br/><i>God is truth !</i><br/><i>God is beauty ! Praise him !</i></p> <p>2 None can see God above ;<br/>neighbours here we can love ;<br/>thus may we Godward move,<br/>finding him in others,<br/>sisters all, and brothers :<br/><i>Refrain</i></p> | <p>3 Jesus came, lived and died<br/>for our sake, crucified,<br/>rose again, glorified ;<br/>he was born to save us<br/>by the truth he gave us :<br/><i>Refrain</i></p> <p>4 To our Lord praise we sing —<br/>light and life, friend and king,<br/>coming down love to bring,<br/>pattern for our duty,<br/>showing God in beauty :<br/><i>Refrain</i></p> |
|---|---|

Percy Dearmer

### Prayer of Praise and Adoration

God, Father, Son and Spirit - we gather to praise and glorify you.  
Before time and space, you were: Into time and space, you came,  
Within time and space, you are. Creator of life, Saviour of life, Giver of life - we worship you.  
You commanded all things into existence; And gave humanity its first breath;  
Even now you are at work in your world, Creating, sustaining, life-giving God,  
We praise and adore you, In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Loving Father, we praise you for the wonderful things which you have given us:  
For the beautiful sun, For the rain which makes things grow,  
For the woods & the fields, For the sea and the sky,  
For the flowers and the birds And for all your gifts to us.  
Everything around us rejoices. Make us also to rejoice and give us thankful hearts.

### Prayer of Confession

From your generosity, we turn to our pettiness, and ask your forgiveness, O God.  
From your love which includes the whole world, we remember with shame that so often we exclude others from our lives, our concern, and our prayers. But we know that you are generous with your forgiveness, and so we ask for it and accept it now. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; hear then the word of grace - all we who truly repent of all our sin, our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God. **Amen**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 55:10-13  
 Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

### Reflection

This is one of Jesus' most famous parables. We think we know it so well – but do we? It is a familiar story to its first hearers – they would feel its pain; they were longing for the kingdom of God to come. So, the punchline is somewhat baffling: the crop is growing (vv.8-9), the fulfilment of all their hopes is within earshot – but where? The disciples don't get it. So, they ask Jesus why he's being so cryptic and what the parable means. It's important to grasp the Old Testament passages lurking behind what Jesus says here, especially Isaiah 55:10-

13, which we just heard in our Call to Worship. In that text, God's word stands for God himself coming: so, Jesus is both sower and seed. He is both the one bringing the fulfilment of God's plans, and God himself visiting and restoring Israel, bringing the kingdom right here, right now. Are we listening?

So, Jesus is talking about the way things are. He describes two groups of people. The first are those who hear the parables but take little notice of it, almost shrugging their shoulders. These are just pretty stories, nothing else. They don't believe the world needs to or could change. They either don't believe that God is interested in them or that God would send someone like Jesus to rescue them. So, they're not prepared to hang around for more.

But he is also talking about the way things could be. The other group is the disciples. They've been given the secret of the kingdom (v.11), because they've stayed to find out more (v.12). They are asking questions – and that is how we learn how to be disciples. Discipleship is about listening and looking, hearing what Jesus is saying, seeing what he is doing, and wanting more. Maybe one connection with us is climate change. At the moment the people suffering the most are the poorest people in our world, particularly those in the "third world" but our actions can help them retain land they've come to rely on for housing, for their livelihoods. We can do something about it if we take action today! If we follow Christ.

Jesus is the kingdom in action; we see it in what he does as well as hear it in what he says. The disciples have seen him heal, feed the hungry, bring the isolated into his new family – this is the secret that is revealed to them as they pay attention. Do we see it?

And discipleship is about living it, bearing fruit in our lives by hearing and doing, leaving an old way of understanding the world and God and beginning a new one in the new community God is gathering together around Jesus, based on hearing and doing his word.

Well that's one way, the traditional way, of reading the text. But what about seeing the text in a different way. Many scholars believe this to be the original way and it's all about God because it is about the way God went out to sow the seed, and little of it germinated. Some took a shallow root and it failed to live up to the pressure, while that which did produced a rich harvest of one hundred, sixty or thirty fold. It's God the sower and God the harvester who produces the crop. And it is all God's work, for you and I are nothing but the soil into which the seed is planted. So which type of soil are you?

**Amen**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

We start with the **thumb** - It's nearest to us; so we pray for those who are closest in our affections and thoughts. We pray especially for our families & friends. The thumb is also set apart from the fingers so we pray for those abroad, missionaries or people living in difficult situations separated from their friends and families.

Next, the **forefinger**, which points and gives direction. And so we pray for those who have authority over our lives: our teachers and instructors; our parents; our leaders.

Then the **big finger**. Let us pray for those in important positions: King Charles and Queen Camilla, so new in their roles; the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak; the leaders of the nations of this world and particularly Volodymyr Zelensky and Vladimir Putin; we pray for peace in Ukraine. We also pray for the heads of industry; and for central and local government.

And the **fourth finger**? Pianists call this the weak finger; so we remember in our prayers the weak and the vulnerable; the sick in body, mind or Spirit; our elderly neighbours; the homeless and the unemployed.

Last of all comes the **little finger**. That stands for us, each & every one of us. Thank you, O Lord, for including us in the circle of your great love. You know our needs and we are content to leave them in your care.

*Our Father, who art in heaven .....*

**Hymn – STF 487 – You shall go out with joy**

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OH0XbpNY2g8>

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,  
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you.

There'll be shouts of joy and the trees of the field  
shall clap, shall clap their hands,

and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,

and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,

and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,

and you'll go out with joy.

Stuart Dauermann (b. 1944) and Steffi Geiser Rubin

### **Blessing**

Go with the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen