

# Salford Methodist Circuit



**Treasured Treasure - 26th July 2020**

**Rach Collins**

**Transcript**

Hello, and welcome to worship on today, Sunday the 26th of July. I'm Rach Collins, probably most well-known in the circuit as Matt's wife. Though some of you may have seen me preaching at Monton in January or know me through my links with Methodist Women in Britain. I'm a Local Preacher in the Ashton-under-Lyne Circuit and from September will be training to be a presbyter at Queen's. But don't worry too much, I am taking Matt with me but he's still going to be your communications officer from afar.

I've always found it strange when welcoming people to their own church as a visiting preacher and today I'm doing more than that, I'm welcoming you in your own homes. Though I am often part of the Salford congregation on a Sunday morning. But when we welcome one another, we welcome God so let's take this moment to welcome one another, to welcome God and to find our calm, our peace in this moment. Here are some verses from Psalm 145:

*All your works praise you, Lord;  
your faithful people extol you.  
They tell of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your might,  
so that all people may know of your mighty acts  
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.  
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures through all generations.*

Today we're exploring what God's kingdom is like and let's first join with Clare to sing "The Kingdom Of God Is Justice And Joy

## **Hymn: The Kingdom of God Is Justice and Joy**

*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.*

*The kingdom of God  
is mercy and grace,  
the prisoners are freed,  
the sinners find place,*

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*the outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share,  
and hope is awakened  
in place of despair.*

*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.*

*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!*

We come now to our prayers of adoration and thanksgiving. When I say "God of all people" please respond with the words "We praise and adore you." Let's pray.

Maker of worlds out of love,  
giver of life,  
source of patience,  
bringer of order out of chaos,  
God of all people,  
**we praise and adore you.**

When we were lost, you were looking for us.  
When we came to our senses, we saw that you had been there all the time  
calling to us in our absence and our want.  
God of all people,  
**we praise and adore you.**

When we were lonely, you were waiting for us.  
When we became humble, we saw that you had been there all the time  
reaching through our isolation and despair.  
God of all people,  
**we praise and adore you.**

When we are... When we were battered and hurt, we saw and understood.  
When we became vulnerable, we saw that you had been there all the time  
offering healing in the hands that touched our wounds.

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God of all people,  
**we praise and adore you.**

God of small and unpromising beginnings,  
of the undeserving the lazy and the indifferent,  
of those who are hungry and poor and fragile,  
the exile the exhausted and the refugee,  
we praise you, that you reveal yourself in surprising places,  
that you are always there for us,  
helping us to laugh to love and to find hope,  
that you give plenty where nothing was expected,  
an abundance where the cup was full,  
God of all people,  
**we praise and adore you.**

And we join together to say 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.*

Today we're exploring some of the parables and I have here a parable box. We can tell it's a parable because it's gold, so it must have something very precious inside it. It's also quite old and parables were a gift that were given to us before we were born. Do you know what? It's also got a lid and sometimes parables can be really difficult to get into. We're going to sing together next, to prepare to grapple with these parables. Let's sing, Speak O Lord.

## **Hymn: Speak, O Lord**

*Speak, O Lord, as we come to you  
to receive the food of your holy word.  
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;  
shape and fashion us in your likeness,  
that the light of Christ might be seen today  
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.  
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us*

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*all your purposes, for your glory.*

*Teach us, Lord, full obedience,  
holy reverence, true humility.  
Test our thoughts and our attitudes  
in the radiance of your purity.  
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see  
your majestic love and authority.  
Words of power that can never fail;  
let their truth prevail over unbelief.*

*Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;  
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.  
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time  
that will echo down through eternity.  
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,  
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.  
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built  
and the earth is filled with your glory.*

So, are we ready? Let's see what's inside.

## **Bible Reading: Matthew 13 : 31 - 33 & 44 - 52**

### ***The Parable of the Mustard Seed***

*He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."*

### ***The Parable of the Yeast***

*He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."*

### ***Three Parables***

*"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be*

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*at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

## ***Treasures New and Old***

*"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.*

We often use the phrases 'Kingdom of God' and 'Kingdom of Heaven' interchangeably. I guess you're about to find out which one I use more. When we say 'Kingdom of Heaven' we often think of a place, but actually the 'Kingdom of God' is much more like a verb than a noun. God's reign is evident in the Kingdom of God. It's a place where the people of God meet and spend time and where they experience God's nature. There's also a 'now' and a 'not yet' of the Kingdom of God that we need to hold in tension. Yes, part of it is a future thing, a place of heaven that we'll go to when we die. but also the Kingdom of God is around right now. In the Lord's Prayer earlier we prayed 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' That's not a future prayer but a right now prayer. We pray that heaven will be apparent on earth, that we will see God's reign, the Kingdom of God right now. As we explore these parables we have to hold those tensions together; the place versus the nature, and the 'now' and 'not yet' of God's kingdom. For this is not a kingdom like the ones that we live in, nor a kingdom like we've ever visited, nor even a kingdom we can think of or search for on the internet. But this is a kingdom we can come to understand; a kingdom we can know something of; a kingdom we can live in, now but also not yet.

Let's start with the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Can you imagine how tiny a mustard seed is? And when planted turns into this enormous tree, so that birds can make their nests in it. Like the leaven in the next parable, something tiny that changes everything around it. And these birds build their nests; a home for the birds. When I've told this story before, I've had children tell me that it's not the Parable of the Mustard Seed but the Parable of the Birds, the place that they can find that's home. And I like to think of it of a diversity of birds in this tree, not just a whole tree with one type of bird; but with the whole range of creatures that fly in the air nesting in this tree. Like the diversity of every fish that we hear about in the final parable. I wonder what that nest would be like for you in the tree with all the birds? Where's cosy for you? I love the idea of sitting in a corner and reading a book, a little nook to hide away in. I have friends who've got nook corners in their house; we've got a corner sofa and that is where I am often at my happiest, with a hot chocolate and a lovely book to read, nested away on the sofa. I wonder if that is what Heaven is like; nesting in the mustard seed tree?

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If we think of the nests in the mustard seed tree as our home and look at the now, rather than not yet, of heaven and home, but how our home is now. I don't know about you but for me my home feels like the safest place the place where I can get within one metre of other people, the place where I can go without having to wear a face covering, a place where I know what's going on, a place of safety. Goodness is not for everyone, home is not always safe. Some people feel trapped or scared or endangered in their home. How can we make sure that this earth is a home of safety, that the mustard seed that can be planted can make this earth a tree where nests can be built for birds so they can feel safe and home here? What about those other two parables, the two that sound, like, really similar? 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field;' that one we can understand. Heaven is like treasure. Treasure to be found that we seek out. Yes! That's what we understand of God. God that we need to seek out and find. But what about the other one? It's not actually the same. The first is about treasure and the second, yes, is about a pearl but it doesn't say 'the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl', it says 'the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking a pearl.' Now this is not just anybody seeking a pill but someone who knows what a fine pearl will look like, who knows what they're looking for and when they find it they sell everything, everything, to get hold of it. So if Heaven is the treasure in the field, and we are the pearl of great price because the Kingdom of God is searching for us. When we think of searching I often think of hide-and-seek and there's an optimum age isn't there to play hide-and-seek with a child? The age where when they're hiding you just have to pretend to look in the wrong places, just to make sure they know that they're actually good at the game. But when they're looking for you it's almost as simple as covering your eyes and opening them wide to be found. God is like that all we have to do is open our eyes to find God, seeking is as easy as going to seek. But the treasure of Heaven, and the treasure of us, is not worthless; it's priceless. It's incredibly costly. It's more than we can imagine. And this is something that we see in love, in God's love for us through Jesus, and in our love for one another as we seek God's kingdom; seek to bring God's kingdom here. We find it's costly.

There are some ways that we echo this love and there are some vows we make in church that show some of what it's like; the promises we make to one another are shadows of the promises that God makes to us. I think of the ring promise in a wedding. When I go to a wedding my favourite point is that moment the promise with the rings; 'I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage, with my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you, within the love of God.'

Now those aren't easy promises to keep always. All that I have I share with you is not always simple when actually I want control of remote control instead of sharing it. I don't know about your household but we spend more time deciding what to watch on TV than actually watching it. But this is what God's love is like. God wants all that we are and all that we have so that God can treasure us and we can treasure God.

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God treasures us and invites us to seek the kingdom in all that we do and all that we are, for this is where we will find the greatest treasure. So may we find our home in God and go seeking God's kingdom here on earth and know that as we find that treasure, that we too are treasured also. Amen.

Let us pray:

God you gave Jesus to us as a treasure found where we least expected it.  
as the one prize worth everything we have.

With a generosity beyond our dreams he offered his life freely to us and to the world.

We offer you ourselves in your love  
and in your investment in us  
honour our faith from which these small beginnings may grow evidence of love,  
justice and peace.

And our prayers for the world:

Loving God, there's so much going on in our world,  
we pray for the headlines in our news,  
the leaders and the people making decisions.  
May we seek your kingdom here.

We pray for our communities,  
the people we see and the people we don't get to see,  
our friends and our loved ones.  
May we seek your kingdom here.

And we pray for ourselves,  
may we know your kingdom within us,  
help us to grow in you.  
May we seek your kingdom here.  
In Jesus name, Amen.

We sing together of the kingdom that calls us, 'Hear The Call Of The Kingdom.

## **Hymn: Hear The Call Of The Kingdom**

*Hear the call of the kingdom,  
lift your eyes to the King;  
let his song rise within you  
as a fragrant offering  
of how God, rich in mercy,  
came in Christ to redeem  
all who trust in his unfailing grace.*

*Hear the call of the kingdom  
to be children of light*

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*with the mercy of heaven,  
the humility of Christ;  
walking justly before him,  
loving all that is right,  
that the life of Christ may shine through us.*

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,  
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
salvation in Jesus' name.*

*Hear the call of the kingdom  
to reach out to the lost  
with the Father's compassion  
in the wonder of the cross,  
bringing peace and forgiveness,  
and a hope yet to come:  
let the nations put their trust in him.*

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,  
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
salvation in Jesus' name.*

So may we find our home in God and go a seeking for God's kingdom here on earth and know that as we find treasure, that we are treasured also. Amen.

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