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ORDINARY 17A

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A short act of worship for use in peoples homes while churches are closed.

A Free resource part funded by



as well as donations from Individuals, churches and **twelvebaskets**.

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For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource>

Hymn: 255 STF – The Kingdom of God is justice and joy - [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

Psalm 105:1 – Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name.
God whose love is all at once for your whole creation
And for each one of us,
We worship you.

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name.
God whose spirit is moving amongst us today
And is on offer for each one of us,
We worship you.

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name.
God who calls us into community
And has a role for each one of us in your kingdom,
We worship you.

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name.
God whose son Jesus Christ is alive
And invites us into abundant life,
We worship you.

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name.
As we turn to you today,
Take this humble offering of our praise,
And turn our whole lives into your worship.

Amen.¹

We now say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Romans 8:26-39 - [Click for Reading](#)

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 - [Click for Reading](#)

Reflections on the readings

How do you describe what you are trying to say?

How do you tell someone how much you love them, or how beautiful the sunset is tonight?

How do you describe the love God has for us, or the way your imagination works?

¹ Opening prayers written by Lucy Zwolinska

When we try to describe things, it can be hard to find the right words, especially when we want to show someone just how important our feelings are, or just how special or difficult something is. In these situations, we might try to tell a story to communicate our message, might we?

We see Jesus do this a lot in his ministry. He was a great story teller, and what he was trying to explain was really difficult for people to get their heads around. You see, Jesus was changing how people understood God – he was inviting them to see that God is close, not far away. God is loving, not always angry. God is inviting each of us to be a part of God's plan for the world, not pulling the strings like some kind of puppet-master. So Jesus used lots of stories to tell that message.

In today's stories, or 'parables, there is a lot about 'smallness'. Jesus is trying to show that we don't have to be big, grand, clever or rich to be a part of God's family. In fact, it probably helps if we are none of those things! The Kingdom of heaven is like a seed, like a few grains of yeast, like a pearl, like a net. Simple, small, everyday items. This brings to mind the famous quote from the anthropologist Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

It is easy to look out onto the challenges of our world, and make the assumption that they can *only* be resolved by big business, bilateral government or someone richer, cleverer, more powerful than you or I.

But the Jesus story reminds us that this is not true. Jesus' invitation throughout the gospels is to be part of something small, a little band of disciples, a seed, a pearl, a few grains of yeast. Then, with God's love, when we work together, when we invite others to offer their 'smallness', we see change begin to happen.

As churches we have often become distracted by a fascination with 'bigness', a desire to have large church buildings, full to bursting with people, to compare sizes of congregation and height of church spire. And who, after being part of a carol service with 1,000 voices joining in with Hark the Herald, or gathering as part of the worshiping thousands at a festival like Greenbelt or Spring Harvest, wouldn't feel attracted to all that. We are called to seek growth in our churches, and to bring new people into the love of Christ – but have we sometimes forgotten about people and looked only for better statistics?

In this time of Coronavirus, where large gatherings have been impossible for several months now, we are being reminded of Jesus' commitment to smallness. Jesus' desire to bring a small group of followers around him to learn, listen and challenge one another. Over the course of Christianity, alongside our ongoing fascination with the big, there have been people who have kept alive this commitment to the small. Amongst them, Methodists have often sought to meet in small, accountability groups – class meetings, house groups, home groups, prayer cells, intentional communities, they have gone by many names.

Are you part of such a group? Would you like to be? Is this the time for you to find some people you trust and build a small community – you could meet online for now,

or in a park or a garden, and have a conversation about how you could support each other in your Christian discipleship. You may like to make use of the Methodist Way of Life resources that the Methodist Church has been producing. Find out more at methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life

This week, as we are telling stories and listening to other people tell stories, can we look for God in the little details? The simple things?

God is always inviting us to be a part of the story of love that God is writing. Jesus' life and ministry was one long invitation to be a part of that story, through telling lots of little stories, through watching over one another in love.

Shall we take up the invitation today?²

Prayers of intercession

Lord we pray for our world broken by war and conflict. Conscious of people living without homes, water and food whilst we have all we need. Conscious of people facing war just along the road from their village rather than a post office or a school. We pray particularly for the people of and all those who share in ministry there.

What is on your heart Lord?

Show us what to do. Let us know your will so we can follow you.

Lord we pray for those who are grieving or in pain and we think of those who have lost loved ones, who are tired of living alone and find it hard to find comfort without that special person. We think of those who are ill and find it hard to make it through each day and we ask that you give them comfort and wrap your loving arms around them.

What is on your heart Lord.

Show us what to do. Let us know your will so we can follow you.

We pray for ourselves..... that we might be inspired to act to do your will. That we might know your presence with us. That our hearts may be warmed by your grace, that our minds might be stretched to face new ideas.

What is on your heart Lord.

Show us what to do. Let us know your will so we can follow you.

Amen.³

² Reflection written by Tim Baker

³ Prayers of intercession written by Jane Bingham

Hymn: 545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

As we rise to face the week ahead,
Rise with us, O God.

As we go to face the challenges of the days and weeks to come,
Travel with us, O God.

As we go to seek to be the best we can be,
May we know your presence alongside us, may we recognise your Spirit at work.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁴

⁴ Additional prayers by Tim Baker