

**The Methodist Church
Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit**

**Worship at Home
week beginning 8th October 2023
with Lister Baynes**

Taking responsibility for what's entrusted to us.

Call to worship

Come, taste what God has to offer.

Come, hear what Christ has to say.

Come, see what we are called to.

O Lord, we come.

Prayer of approach and adoration

God of all ages and all generations, we lay before you today:

ourselves and all that has been entrusted to us,
our prayers to surround those who are in trouble,
our words to share your good news,
our hands to reach out to those who are lonely,
our feet to walk with those whose journey is hard,

our hearts to pass on your great legacy of love,
and our lives for you to shape and nurture.

We lay this all before you, in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Stf 677 Christ is made the sure foundation

Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the head and cornerstone,
chosen of the Lord, and precious,
binding all the Church in one,
holy Zion's help for ever,
and her confidence alone.

To this temple, where we call thee,
come, O Lord of Hosts, today;
with thy constant loving-kindness
hear thy servants as they pray;
and thy fullest benediction
shed within its walls always.

Here vouchsafe to all thy servants
what they ask of thee to gain,
what they gain from thee for ever
with the blessed to retain,
and hereafter in thy glory
evermore with thee to reign.

Laud and honour to the Father,
laud and honour to the Son,
laud and honour to the Spirit,
ever Three, and ever One,
consubstantial, co-eternal,
while unending ages run.

Prayer of Praise and thanksgiving

Lord Jesus,

you were treated as an alien among your own people,

an interloper in the Temple,

a criminal by those you came to save.

Yet you came willingly.

By your death, you have made enemies friends;

the rejected, family,

and us, your brothers and sisters,

inheritors of your kingdom.

For this we praise and thank you.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Faithful God, you give us chance after chance,
opportunity after opportunity, yet we do not take them. **Forgive us and help us, we pray.**

You entrust to us things that are precious, and life-giving, yet we do not share them. **Forgive us and help us, we pray.**

You offer us a share in your kingdom, a path to fulfilment, yet we want our own way and go our own way. **Forgive us and help us, we pray.**

You invite us to work for the future, to bless the next generation, yet we live for ourselves and look only at now. **Forgive us and help us, we pray.**

You speak both words of wisdom and warnings, of security and salvation, yet we are in danger of missing out. **Forgive us and help us, we pray.**

We pray – in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us
from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the
power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Reading **Matthew 21: 33 -46**

The Parable of the Tenants

³³ “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

³⁵ “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

³⁸ “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰ “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

⁴¹ “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvellous in our eyes’^[a]?

⁴³ “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”^[b]

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about

them. ⁴⁶ They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Reflection



The last time I prepared the Worship at Home service the focus was on wheat and weeds. I was on familiar ground then, being an expert on weeds. I feel less confident this time as we move to the world of viticulture. I’m not aware of many vineyards in the circuit, but as a child growing up in Filey I would often pass the vinery attached to the Bronte Café, so named because it was alleged to have been the building in which Charlotte Bronte stayed on her holidays. The vine had spread out to cover the whole ceiling and I looked in fascination as the purple grapes appeared. Rumour had it that they were not edible, but that might have been put about to keep the likes of us lads out of the premises!

This parable is less about the vineyard than the workers in it. Jesus bases his parable on one used by Isaiah (Isaiah 4: 1 – 7) who used the metaphor of the vineyard for the people of God, a common image used in the Old Testament and familiar to the Jews in the first century AD. Like the parable of the two sons we heard last week this is another of Jesus’ lightly disguised attack on the leaders of the time, and they would know it.

They have ill-treated the ‘slaves’ – the prophets sent by God. They have killed the ‘son’ – a foreshadowing of what will happen to Jesus. They may have worked the vineyard, but we know from Isaiah that its fruit is poor. Now we also know that they have a great disregard for its ‘owner’ – God.

Quoting from Psalm 118, part of the prayer of praise recited when celebrating the Passover, Jesus reminds his hearers of not losing sight of what matters. The cornerstone is that upon which everything else is laid. An alternative translation is ‘keystone’, the stone at the top of an arch that holds everything in place. Either way,

losing that stone has awful consequences, such as being crushed by the collapsing structure. The Passover festival is the ultimate freedom festival, celebrating God's people set free from slavery, and becoming a people – ^[1]_[SEP] have they now forgotten who and whose they are?

This is a juridical parable: a parable that invites its hearers to pass judgement on themselves as they reflect on their own approach to the 'vineyard', to their care for what has been entrusted to them, and to God. Have they – have we – forgotten for whom we are working? Have we become possessive about what we do, or developed a sense of entitlement to what is not ours?

This year, more than anytime before, I have been acutely aware during our Harvest celebrations of the way in which we humans have neglected our responsibility for maintaining the wonderful creation that God has given to us. God entrusted his people with all he had made and formalised this arrangement through the Covenant he made with them. The covenant between God and God's people develops through the generations and is a two-way agreement in which they will live as God's people and God will be their God. The people's responsibility is to live in such a way that God is shown to the surrounding nations, who will (hopefully) also come to God.

Maintaining the planet is one of the things that God wants his people to do, together with valuing the gifts we have been given. There is also an understanding that those who have an excess of those gifts will share them with those who don't.

Just a quick look at the world today is enough to show us how far we have neglected our responsibilities of caring for and using the things that God has entrusted us with. This not new, of course, but it seems the effects of centuries of neglect, of greed, of extortion are coming to fruition with the change in climate and the catastrophic events that we are observing throughout the world. The indifference shown by world leaders to some of the most neglected and disadvantaged peoples is not part of God's purpose. God created the world and everything in it so that everyone might share.

The parable of the tenants in Matthew's Gospel, encourages us to think about our responsibility to

be faithful custodians of everything that God graciously and patiently entrusts to us. We have all got things wrong in the past; the important thing is: what are we going to do now?

We pray that with God's guidance we might find the way Amen

StF 727 God in his love for us lent us this planet

God in his love for us lent us this planet, gave it a purpose in time and in space: small as a spark from the fire of creation, cradle of life and the home of our race.

Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty, life that sustains us in body and mind: plenty for all, if we learn how to share it, riches undreamed of to fathom and find.

Long have our human wars ruined its harvest; long has earth bowed to the terror of force; long have we wasted what others have need of, poisoned the fountain of life at its source.

Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it, ours, as his stewards, to farm and defend. From its pollution, misuse, and destruction, good Lord, deliver us, world without end.

Prayers for others

Father, Lord of creation,
we pray for all who have the power to shape or mar this planet.
May they act responsibly and wisely to sustain life.

Jesus, Lord of the Church, our Redeemer and Judge,
may we confront injustice,
speak up against the exploitation of the weak,
and accept the cost of discipleship.
Holy Spirit, Challenger and Changer,
melt the hearts of the spiritually complacent,
awaken the minds that need to change
so that faith may be renewed, lifestyles reshaped,
in tune with the world and its Creator.
Trinity of Unity, restore our broken world,
and the fractured relationships that we recall
before you now

the cornerstone of our lives.

Amen.

(A time for your own prayers)

Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
grant that we and those for whom we have
prayed
may be whole and complete in you.

Amen.

We seek your Kingdom throughout every sphere

*(This may be a new hymn to some of you. Written
by Noel Robinson and Andy Flannagan in June
2021, it is a prayer that through ordinary
Christians like you and me, God would transform,
revive and heal our society. It is sung to a slightly
speeded arrangement of the hymn, Abide with
me.)*

We seek Your Kingdom throughout every sphere
We long for Heaven's demonstration here
Jesus, Your light shine bright for all to see
Transform, revive, and heal society

Before all things, in Him all things were made
Inspiring culture, media, and trade
May all our work serve Your economy
Transform, revive, and heal society

Peace, truth, and justice reigning everywhere
With us be present in our public square
Fill all who lead with Your integrity
Transform, revive, and heal society

Forgive us, Lord, when we have not engaged
Failing to scribe Your heart on history's page
Make us again what we were made to be
Transform, revive, and heal society

Faithful to govern ever may we be
Selfless in service, loving constantly
In everything may Your authority
Transform, revive, and heal society
Transform, revive, and heal society

Sending out prayer

May we live in faith,
act in righteousness,
always be loved
and make Jesus, the Christ,