



**July 26, 2020
Worship Packet**



PRELUDE

Ascribe to the Lord- G. Bassani
No recordings

Quando Sperasti, O Core- G. Handel
<https://youtu.be/Qw9BPBEiEvw>

Love Ye the Lord- G. Handel
<https://youtu.be/Fv1xK9zFR8M>

Zueignung- R. Strauss
<https://youtu.be/1u5g8zO2iLo>

Der Scholar- Wolf
<https://youtu.be/HjkMhJnXbIo>

Verschwiegene Liebe- Wolf
<https://youtu.be/-MedTD0cuso>

Komm, Liebchen, Komm! – Wolf
<https://youtu.be/YfeMANDVfJ4>

Domine Deus- A. Vivaldi
https://youtu.be/z_nFYc_bSDU

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: A tiny seed that burgeons into a majestic tree with branches that offer shelter and shade; or yeast hidden within a bushel of flour, that transforms the dough in due time:

Many: **This is what the kingdom of heaven is like.**

One: We gather round Jesus our teacher and Lord seeking wisdom and understanding, longing for a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven.

All: **Let anyone with ears to hear listen!**

OPENING HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

#339

<https://youtu.be/Lh5QCv7aW2g>

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God, of mystery, God of life, we imagine that we are capable judges of power and wisdom and goodness. We trust our own standards; we separate and categorize; we mark the performance of others. We fail to trust your power, hidden in all things. We fail to watch, working out your purposes. Gracious God, hidden and manifest, transform our withered imaginations until we yield the judgments we trust to a love we cannot control. Amen.

SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

DECLARATION OF PARDON

God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. God loves a humble and contrite heart. Hear the Good News and know it is true for you, because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are a forgiven people. Amen.

AN ACT OF PRAISE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Enlightening God, the unfolding of your Word gives light and provides wisdom to all who seek your truth. Open our minds and hearts by the presence of your holy Spirit, that the mystery of your heavenly realm is made evident here on earth. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 29:15-28

Glen Crane

Pew Bible Page 24

Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah’s eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.” So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.” So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?” Laban said, “This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.” Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

One: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING Matthew 13:31-33,44-52 *Rev. Brooks Smith*
Pew Bible Page 847-848

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.’

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.’

‘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 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.

‘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.’

SERMON

Bait and Switch

Rev. Brooks Smith

Jacob is a scoundrel and thief. He goes along with his mother's scheme to steal his father's blessing from his twin brother Esau. The ruse works and Esau is wounded and angry and vengeful.

Jacob flees. He meets Rachel and strikes a strange bargain with her father to work seven years for her to be his wife. Laban does the Bait and Switch and sends his older daughter to the wedding tent.

Then the text says—When morning came it was Leah.

So, Jacob maybe not be the sharpest tool in the toolshed.

However, his love is so strong for Rachel he agrees to work for Laban for another seven years.

So he is a man of focus and foolishness.

A saint and a sinner.

A scoundrel—and a hero.

So God's love for Jacob surely gives us hope. Hope that God can love such a one as you and me.

W.H.Auden in his poem Sept 1, 1939 says of himself as the poet and of us that we are composed of Eros and of dust—spirit and body. But the story of Jacob reminds us that we human beings are more complicated—we are scoundrels some time, thieves even—naive sometimes, even stupid—

Eros and dust, yes. But also Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde—remember Robert Louis Stevenson's great and disturbing novel.

And, too, we are saintly in our love and labor and laughter—like Jacob.

While on his flight from his brother's wrath, Jacob has a dream of the angels ascending and descending—of the liveliness of the spiritual world. He a mystic, a visionary—blessed of God.

The text says he is one who wrestles with divine and human beings.

And Jacob is a man who finds the love of his life. He was sent into exile essentially to find a wife and to get him away from Esau's potentially murderous wrath.

Tenderly Genesis tells the story. Rachel needs to water the sheep that she is caring for—Jacob rolls away the stone of a cave where there is water—they enter. The text says—Jacob kissed Rachel and wept.

Then 14 years of labor later—they are married.

The readings from Matthew focus on the Kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of God—and the link to the Jacob story is Jacob's sacrificial focus on who he loved and his willingness to pay a great price.

This morning we are hearing the Jacob/Rachel story and Jesus proclamation fo the Kingdom in the context of this horrible global crisis—we know hundreds of thousands have died officially and that millions more will die. I trust that most of us have friends who have died from the virus.

I am active in the Fanwood Scotch Plains Rotary and we have a partner project in Uganda and when we zoomed with them weeks ago, they were very focused on drought and poverty killing hundreds of thousands all exacerbated by the virus.

And so we agonize.

And schools—education on zoom is something—but really not much compared to in-school experiences and learning. How will we do this to keep teachers and students and staff safe? How will parents cope—managing work and childcare and their role as teachers. Our grandchildren are both dyslexic—how in particular will children with special needs learn in this environment?

We agonize.

How will some businesses reopen—safely and in a way to be profitable?What will happen in the long run to theaters, airlines, tourism, hotel? It all seems so painfully unfair.

We agonize for them and for ourselves.

So in this context we hear the parable of the Kingdom

The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast imply that the Kingdom is growing dramatically if secretly on its own. It is as if Jesus is saying—just hang on, keep

your eyes open, stay awake and boom—the kingdom is coming. Sometimes, we need to let go and let God/Spirit/Christ work in the world and in us.

One of the slogans from AA is “Let go and let God.” We might just say “Don’t just do something—stand there.”

That is sometimes.

The second set of parables speak about a hidden treasure in a field, a precious pearl, and the good fish that can be caught. Here then is the call to decisive action. You want to experience the Kingdom of God—take action—take some chances. Buy the field, hold onto the pearl, go fishing.

CAPC took action after Hurricane Sandy and created a soup kitchen. I can still remember the pained joy in Pastor Lynn’s voice as she told this story. A mother and daughter were walking along Watchung Ave and Pastor Lynn’s window was opened. The mother said ‘The soup kitchen is open’. The daughter said—“Oh, mommy that means we can eat today.”

We must fight back against the evil that has come from this virus—and that has been a part of our world for a long time.

John Lewis died this past week and offers us inspiration, challenge, blessings as we fight back. We may not be called to walk the Edmund Pettus bridge and confront state troopers defending institutionalized racism, but we are called to act.

When our granddaughter was nearly four years old, we were out walking. We saw a dog with a nasty skin infection and one of those plastic shields around its neck. She looked at the dog and said—“That doggy needs its mommy.”

We will find in ourselves great wellsprings of compassion and caring to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

And we will have to be smart in order to reinvent ourselves. Six months ago, I didn't know what Zoom was, and I will wager that is true of most of us. Then, during one week, I found myself six Zoom calls including one I had set up with international partners.

For eighty ears, Skip Winter and I have organized mission trips to Nicaragua. We usually raised money in the \$30,000 range for our partners there. We are not flying to Nicaragua in January—and it would be tough to recruit new folks. So instead we are brainstorming how to have a Backyard and Virtual Mission Trip—it will be

a great challenge to create an experience that is fun and lively and evokes the joy and intensity that mission trips bring.

So indeed we need something of Jacob’s scheming abilities and certainly his capacity for labor and sacrifice. We need the calming presence of the Spirit to assure us that the Kingdom is growing somehow, somewhere. We do need to trust that God has planted tiny but powerful seeds of love and justice and hope amidst the despair and desperation. And we need to reinvent our lives, our love, our worship and work so we can be faithful and fruitful in these days—that are horrible in so many ways.

W. H. Auden’s poem reminds readers of the beginning of World War II. So its context is the horror of the war. The poem ends with this call to us.

**Defenseless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the just
Exchange their messages:
May I, like them,
Composed of eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.**

**Rev. J. Brooks Smith
July 23, 2020**

SERMON HYMN

Jesus, Priceless Treasure
<https://youtu.be/ueseiz03QVY>

#365

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH Apostle's Creed**

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

ANTHEM A Simple Song from "Bernstein Mass" L. Bernstein
<https://youtu.be/dWcVHxeCiPk>

OFFERING

Reflect on what offering might make to those around you and to the community. Commit your tithes to church (you can even go to the church's website and click on 'Donate Now' to send in your gifts or mail them to the church office.)

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below; praise Him above ye heav'nly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Brooks Smith

Health Issues:

Please let us know your requests for prayers. Please email Pastor Lynn at pastor@crescentonline.org or call the church office at 908.756.2468

Brian; Anthony; The Beaucasan Family; Leon Edwards; Cynthia; Elaine Duesbury; Frank; Drew Moore; Candyce Norris; Glenna Stevens; Terry; Janie Whiteford; Henry Ward, Jr.; Jay and daughter; Bob Newell; Kassi and Family; Juliet Fydrich; Michael R.; the Carlson family; Karen West; Lindsey Loftons and Brenda Hopper; Thomas West Jr.; Marlotte Troy Williams; Harvey Downing (Jeff's father); Tylenne Torres (health concerns) and for her mother facing surgery; Barbara Smith (COVID); the DeGeneste family (health concerns); Barbara & Craig Wensberg; Gloria Laube.

Homebound: Sonnia Cook.

Bereavement:

The Germinder family as they grieve the passing of George.

World Issues:

Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia)

For all those on the front lines of fighting this virus, essential workers, those sheltering at home, those with loved ones battling the disease, those grieving loved ones who have passed. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayers.

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

*** CLOSING HYMN**

Seek Ye First

#333

<https://youtu.be/JInofnk7OX0>

***BENEDICTION**

Go from this time of worship and sow seeds of love, grace, hope and peace to all you encounter, spreading the Good News with hearts aflame with love.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord shine His holy face upon you and fill you with the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

POSTLUDE Fugue from “Passaglia and Fugue in C Minor -BWV 582”

<https://youtu.be/4UxlcKJyZZE>

Pastor Lynn will be on vacation until Tuesday, July 28th. The church office is open, and Kennedy will be there 8am-12pm each day. Any questions or concerns can be addressed to her or to Joan Pivnichny, Clerk of Session (908)400-7474.

Heaven Is...



Heaven Is...

The Kingdom of Heaven...
is like a mustard seed?
a grain of yeast?
Isn't God's Kingdom
about...people?
Not a mustard seed. Not a grain of yeast.

The Kingdom of Heaven...
is like a hidden treasure?
a rare pearl?
Isn't God's Kingdom
about...people?
Not a hidden treasure. Not a rare pearl.

The Kingdom of Heaven
is like a fish net let down into the deep?
basketfuls of only edible fish?
Isn't God's Kingdom
about...people?
Not a fish net let down into the deep. Not basketfuls of only edible fish.

Yes!

A mustard seed, when planted,
grows and grows, putting forth
branch after branch, leaf after leaf.
A grain of yeast when worked into dough,
rises and rises, allowing
batch after batch, loaf after loaf .

The Kingdom of God is
like a mustard seed, a grain of yeast
when the smallest, loving
deed, word, and prayer of the Gospel
spreads from one believer
to another, to another, to another.

Yes!

A hidden treasure, when found,
causes the finder to sell all possessions
to gain one small treasure.

A rare pearl, when found,
after long searching,
causes the seeker to know its inherent worth.

The Kingdom of Heaven is..
like a hidden treasure, a rare pearl
when the joy of the Gospel Word is found,
which came at a cost,
causing its loving message to be
shared and shared and shared.

Yes!

A fish net, when let down into the deep
gathers all kinds of fish
through hours and hours of hard labor.
Basketfuls of only edible fish
takes patience, perception, and discernment
to sort the worthy from the unworthy.

The Kingdom of Heaven is
like a fish net let down into the deep, basketfuls of only edible fish
for when it is God's time
to bring His people into His Kingdom
He knows who has welcomed and received His Loving Word
joyfully, joyfully, joyfully.

Yes! Yes! Yes!

The Kingdom of Heaven is...
Like a mustard seed. Like a grain of yeast.
Like a hidden treasure. Like a rare pearl.
Like a fish net let down into the deep. Like basketfuls of only edible fish.

The Kingdom of Heaven is...
waiting expecting prepared
for your loving adoption
As. God's. Child.

Matt.13:31-33/44-52

js. haer
07.22.20