

Sunday, 26 July, 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use if you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

Opening Prayer

Lord, open the eyes and ears of our understanding today as we prepare our hearts for worship. We want to see you with our spiritual eyes today. Amen.

Hymn: *Singing the Faith 451, Open the eyes of my heart, Lord*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrw-k7bl3KE>

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.
Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.

To see you high and lifted up,
shining in the light of your glory.
Pour out your power and love;
as we sing holy, holy, holy.

Refrain

To see you high ...

Holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy, holy,
I want to see you.

Paul Baloche

Let us pray together

Lord our God, you require truth in the inward parts. We do not wish to deceive but at times we are not honest with ourselves or honest with others. Take any deception, known or unknown and pour out your Spirit of truth. Today we receive your Holy Spirit and ask that as a cool glass of water, you will refresh and cleanse us today of all sin and duplicity. We give you thanks that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is his gracious word: 'your sins are forgiven.'
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament:

Genesis 29:15-28

Jacob Marries Laban's Daughters

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 for another seven years.' Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

Today's Gospel 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 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.'

Time to Reflect

Our agricultural friends will know the concept of sowing and reaping. I'm not a gardener but I know if I plant seed *potatoes*, I will probably dig up *potatoes*. There are numerous biblical passages pursuing themes of sowing and reaping. Jesus taught parables along these lines. In Galatians 6:7 one reads these words, "Do

not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (ESV). Similar words are found in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 2 Corinthians 9:6.

However, this not just a New Testament concept, in Job 4:8, one reads these words, “As I have observed, those who plough iniquity, and those who sow trouble, reap the same” Job 4:8, and in Hosea 10:18, we discover the prophet’s warning, “You have ploughed in wickedness and reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your mighty men.”

Consider our Old Testament reading in Genesis. Jacob has been deceived and was given Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob the deceiver is himself deceived. We read in Genesis 25:29-34, how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew. In Genesis, Chapter 27, we read how Jacob tricked his aging, blind father, Isaac into giving him the first born’s blessing. There are other trickeries pertaining to Laban’s flock (Genesis 30) but just before Jacob and Esau meet again, Jacob has an encounter at Peniel.

On this night, Jacob wrestles an Angel and before the day breaks there is a *name change*. This is significant because Jacob’s name means, *supplanter, or one who grasps the heel*, (as pertaining to his manner of birth). The name change given to Jacob is now *Israel*, a combination of the Hebrew words for "wrestle" and "God."

What is now sown in Jacob’s life through his encounter with God is a new way of life. Not only has his name been changed but his character will be forever marked by the event at Peniel. As Christians, we

have received a *new name* (Isaiah 56:5, Rev 2:17; 3:12, and a *new nature* (John 3:6, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10, and 2 Corinthians 5:17) so that we can sow good seeds in the lives of others.

I can testify of a new nature within. Since, coming to Christ, I have changed. The Scripture says, “The Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” (2 Corinthians 3:18). According to Wesley there would be an initial sanctification process (a process that attends to the entire work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life) at salvation then a continuing work where the mind of Christ was and is being formed in the Christian’s daily life.

Take a time to sit quietly and ask yourself – what work has already begun in your life? Perhaps, you are not where you want to be but you have progress from where you were.

A time of prayer

Dear Father, I thank you for the ongoing work in my life. I know it will continue until you take me home. Thank you for sins forgiven, for a life with you now, and a life with you in the hereafter.

We pray for the Methodist Church, nationally and worldwide.

We pray for the universal Church and the churches that have met through technological means during this time.

We pray for all those who have suffered loss in this present coronavirus situation.

We thank you for every act of kindness done during this time and all the imaginative ways that ministers and lay

workers have used to keep in touch with their congregations.

We pray for those who are in need of healing, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Lord in your mercy, **hear these prayers.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Singing the Faith 638, THROUGH ALL THE CHANGING SCENES OF LIFE,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVJxhapcj6o>

Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

Of his deliverance I will boast,
till all that are distressed
from my example comfort take,
and charm their griefs to rest.

O magnify the Lord with me,
with me exalt his name;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.

The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just;
deliverance he affords to all
who on his succour trust.

O make but trial of his love;
experience will decide
how blest are they, and only they,
who in his truth confide.

Fear him, you saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;
make you his service your delight,
your wants shall be his care.

*Nahum Tate (1652-1715) and Nicholas
Brady (1659-1726)
Based on Psalm 34*

A prayer of blessing

Lord, I have heard the good news that you accept and love all people, including me. Grant that whatever I do this day I will be responding to this love with a humble and thankful heart. **Amen.** (Taken from Day 26 of Methodist Prayer Handbook, p. 76 by Gwenllian Knighton, supernumerary minister, Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit).

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<https://bible.oremus.org/>

