

Sunday 13th June 2021 – Rev Nutan S J Suray

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

(With psalm 92: 1-5)

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep!” **Amen.**

Hymn: Seek ye first the kingdom (Singing the Faith 254)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

[Seek ye first the kingdom of God \(StF 254\)
\(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you;
Allelu-, alleluia:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
allelu-, alleluia!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and the door shall be opened unto to you;
Allelu-, alleluia:

We shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;
Allelu-, alleluia:

Karen Lafferty (b. 1948)

Let us pray together

Lord, I come with thanksgiving and praises in my heart for your love and faithfulness. You are worthy of my heartfelt worship today.

Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus who inaugurated your kingdom on earth and for the continuing power of the Holy Spirit, which helps the kingdom to grow.

Forgive me Lord when I fail to see your will in my life and in others.

Forgive me when I am overcome with anxiety, when I become impatient and when I lose heart in times of suffering and prevailing evil in our world.

Help me to be confident in your faithfulness even when things seem bleak and to know that you are in control of all things. **Amen.**

Today’s Gospel Reading: Mark 4:26-34

26 He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

30 He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Time to Reflect

Jesus' parable of the mustard seed reminds me of my own journey – the time when I was called to ministry. I had asked the question – how can I, such a small, insignificant person be called to serve the church? I was not convinced that God *had* the power to use me. How wrong I was! Little did I know that God was going to use me outside of my little village, even outside of my country of birth, to serve the church! It is perhaps human nature to judge things by appearance or capability, forgetting that God *does have* power to use whatever He sees fit for a purpose!

Jesus teaches that the growth of a seed is a mystery just like the growth of the Kingdom. We know that a seed needs soil, water and an adequate amount of sunshine to grow, but the question still is - who makes it grow? More importantly, a seed needs to be planted in the ground because a seed, if left alone on a windowsill will not grow. The Seed that Jesus talks about is God's word being sown in people's lives where it will take root and grow. Although for a time the seed seems inactive, Christians must not be anxious but trust in God's timing and sovereignty.

Likewise, the Kingdom of God will grow when the Gospel is shared with others as Romans 10:17 says: "So faith *comes* from hearing [what is told], and what is heard *comes* by the [preaching of the] message concerning Christ." I read online the testimony of a woman, who during this current pandemic was feeling utterly worthless – disappointed with life and did not want to live anymore. However, she decided that she would visit a church before making any final decision, and the turning point came for her during worship when she realised that God loved her deeply. She experienced total peace despite her life having been turned upside down! This woman did not know that her aunt had been praying for many years for her to come to know Jesus as her Saviour! Christians must continue to spread the gospel through prayer, word and actions, even when they do not see the results!

The other important thing to note in this text is that the Kingdom of God starts small, just like the mustard seed. No wonder Jesus' disciples and his contemporaries did not understand that he was not here to establish a 'political kingdom'! In fact, God's kingdom is so contrary to earthly kingdoms in every way that it requires only what are probably seen as the lowest of human standards, such as, humility, servanthood and willingness to serve. However, even though it starts small, it grows beyond expectation. God's word has far-reaching outcomes. In our world, there is on-going persecution for Christians in every continent but the church never seems to die, it is never dulled and it is almost un-stoppable in some places. This is because the power of God helps the Kingdom to spread and grow strong. And so the disciples of Jesus must continue to do whatever they are called to do.

The final thought for us to consider is whether the Kingdom of God is a living reality (here and now) or it is some futuristic notion (eschatological). It will be unfortunate for us to assume that only when Jesus returns as judge and King, will he start his Kingdom too. The New Testament clearly tells us that Jesus already began the work of the Kingdom when he was on this earth. And it is so small, so hidden and invisible in places that we do not have the faintest idea that God is already doing the work. Christians must not lose heart when they feel that God is inactive or absent, when they see so much suffering, evil and the power of darkness taking over this world. God is present and that He will bring justice for each evil perpetrated in His own time. This is my experience that God also brings peace and comfort to all who trust in Him.

Take time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Lord God, we pray for all pastors, church ministers, missionaries and Aid workers who risk their lives for sake of spreading your gospel in word and deed.

We pray for those who have been overcome with struggles of life, doubt and fear and for whom faith means nothing.

We pray for the persecuted Christians in our world, for whom following Christ may mean much suffering.

We pray for those who have been bereaved, those who are in physical, mental or emotional pain.

Faithful God,
Be with us as we seek to serve you so that we may reflect kingdom values rather than worldly values. We ask these prayers through the powerful name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Hear the call of the kingdom (Singing the Faith 407) OR Listen to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

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
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 ...
*Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980) and Stuart
Townend (b. 1963)*

A prayer of blessing

Father God, as we look forward to the new week, may your discerning knowledge fill our hearts and minds to see your will. May we play an active part in extending your kingdom. Help us to bring you praise and glory by being in your service with our words, deeds and thoughts. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Original Materials & all prayers by Rev. Nutan S J Suray