

Welcome to  
your Parish Church  
in the Diocese of Birmingham



ALL SAINTS  
KINGS HEATH

## Holy Communion

Trinity 6, Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023

### We gather

*For those worshipping at home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. Set your Bible alongside. You might light a candle.*

*Music as we gather:*

God, whose farm is all creation

1. God, whose farm is all creation, take the gratitude we give;  
take the finest of our harvest, crops we grow that all may live.

2. Take our ploughing, seeding, reaping, hopes and fears of sun and rain,  
all our thinking, planning, waiting, ripened in this fruit and grain.

3. All our labour, all our watching, all our calendar of care,  
in these crops of your creation, take, O God: they are our prayer.

*(words: John Arlott alt; music: Johann Ludwig Steiner)*

*When the song finishes we stand in silence.*

*We sing: [I am a new creation](#) (sing twice)*

I am a new creation,  
no more in condemnation,  
here in the grace of God I stand.

My heart is overflowing,  
my love just keeps on growing,  
here in the grace of God I stand.

And I will praise you, Lord,  
yes, I will praise you, Lord,  
and I will sing of all that you have  
done.

A joy that knows no limit,  
a lightness in my spirit,  
here in the grace of God I stand.

*(words & music: Dave Bilbrough)*

Priest Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**All: And also with you.**

WELCOME and NOTICES

*We pray:* **Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## We seek forgiveness

CONFESSION

Deacon God proves his love for us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us. Therefore with confidence let us confess our sins and seek his forgiveness. (Romans 5:8)

**All: Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.  
We are not worthy to be called your children.  
We turn to you again.  
Have mercy on us, bring us back to yourself  
as those who once were dead but now have life  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

(cf Luke 15)

FORGIVENESS *is declared:*

*[May]* Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon *us*, pardon and deliver *us* from all *our* sins, confirm and strengthen *us* in all goodness, and keep *us* in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*We stand to give thanks for forgiveness, singing THE GLORIA*

*Glory! Glory! Glory to God!*  
*Glory! Glory! Glory to God!*

1. Glory to God in the heights of the heavens.  
Peace to God's people, all people on earth.
2. Son of the Father, all glory and worship;  
praise and thanksgiving to you, Lamb of God.

3. You take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us, receive our prayer.

4. Seated in pow'r at the right of the Father,  
Jesus alone is the Lord, the Most High.

5. And with the Spirit of love everlasting,  
reigning in glory for ever. Amen.

#### THE COLLECT for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

READINGS [Isaiah 55:10-13](#) and [Romans 8:1-11](#)

HYMN [Father of heaven, whose love profound](#)

1. Father of heav'n, whose love profound  
a ransom for our souls hath found,  
before thy throne we sinners bend,  
to us thy pard'ning love extend.

2. Almighty Son, incarnate Word,  
our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord,  
before thy throne we sinners bend,  
to us thy saving grace extend.

3. Eternal Spirit, by whose breath  
the soul is raised from sin and death,  
before thy throne we sinners bend,  
to us thy quick'ning pow'r extend.

4. Thrice Holy! Father, Spirit, Son;  
mysterious Godhead, Three in One,  
before thy throne we sinners bend,  
grace, pardon, life, to us extend.

*(words: Edward Cooper; music: John Bacchus Dykes)*

*We remain standing for the* GOSPEL READING [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

**All:** Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the end* This is the Gospel of the Lord  
**All: Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON from Margaret

What a heart-warming picture we have in our readings from Second Isaiah and Matthew this morning. It is a picture of joyful abundance, a plentiful harvest that gives bread for now, and enough seed for next year's planting. The rain, snow and good soil lead to the sprouting of the seed and the growth of the grain, even if there are thorns, thistles, rocks and birds to either choke or eat some of the seeds.

For Second Isaiah, the image conveys confidence in Yahweh's word being accomplished, and that the exiled Jews will be able to return from Babylon, a cause that once seemed hopeless, but now the end is in sight, giving such joy that even the mountains and hills will sing and the trees clap their hands.

Matthew is paraphrasing, or more accurately, he is copying Mark's paraphrasing of Jesus's words. Maybe Mark heard the parable from Peter. The great German theologian, Joachim Jeremias<sup>i</sup>, classifies the parable of the sower as a 'contrast-parable', similar in meaning to the parables of the mustard seed, and the yeast. The parable starts with something small and unpromising: seeds, or yeast, and concludes with the great harvest, or the large tree, or the leavened dough. With all these parables, Jeremias says that Jesus is expressing 'joyful confidence'. He is saying that 'in spite of every failure and opposition, God brings from hopeless beginnings the glorious end that he has promised'<sup>ii</sup>

'But hang on...', some of you might be thinking. The second half of our reading gives the meaning of the parable. It's all about our responses to the word of God.

There is a strong consensus among biblical theologians that this interpretation comes from the preaching and teaching of the new church, and is not the words of Jesus. The interpretation turns the parable into an allegory, where each element of the story is given significance. Taking Jesus's words and using them in this way makes a thought-provoking sermon! And it seems that that is what is going on, allegorical interpretation was a technique common in first-century Judaism, and so might naturally have been adopted by the first Christians, who were mainly still Jewish. By taking Jesus's parable and equating each patch of ground to a different type of hearer, our early preacher is changing the meaning, and making the parable more psychological, and so seemingly moving away from Jesus's assurance about the end times. The effect on the listeners would be to wonder about themselves and whether they were 'good soil', or whether the roots of their faith were actually too shallow. They might also start to look around and wonder about the others in their community. There is quite a lot of evidence in the New Testament letters that there was a weighing up of each other, and disagreements about the depths of each other's faith, which takes us down something of a cul-de-sac.

The New Testament is a collection of documents that give us layers of history:

1. The foundational layer is the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, which occurred in the first 30 years of the Christian era.
2. The next layer is what the apostles got up to as they began to live as a Church community, no doubt sharing their memories of Jesus, as they worked out for themselves how they might live while they waited for the return of Christ. At this time, some of them very probably started to write down the sayings of Jesus, and some wrote letters. These documents no longer exist, but we might well have quotations from them in our gospels. They also worshipped together, and there may be elements from this also quoted in the gospels. The disagreements will have started

emerging at this time too, which might have led to the allegorical interpretations of Jesus's teaching of which the parable of the sower is one example.

3. The earliest extant writings we have got, give us the next layer. They are Paul's letters, which date from about 50 onwards. In these letters we have a mixture of profound theology, interwoven with appeals to settle disputes, and live according to the fruits of the Spirit.

4. Then our final layer is the gospels, Acts of the Apostles and some other letters. The first gospel is Mark's, probably written between 60 – 70CE, so 30 – 40 years after the events described. The other three gospels were later, but probably all written before 100. In the gospels we have the words and actions of Jesus, interwoven with the teaching, reflection and lived experience of the early church. The work of biblical theologians over the last 150 years has been to disentangle these layers, and to work out what was going on for the new Church. The work of Jeremias has been to ask whether we can get back to the actual words of Jesus, and he concludes that when we read the parables 'we are standing right before Jesus'<sup>iii</sup>, but, he goes on to say there is a task to do in working out how the parables were adapted, and written up in the gospels, to meet the needs of the Church. I find this a fascinating and faith-enhancing undertaking. The debate gives depth and colour to each layer of the New Testament, bringing the documents off the page, as we can use the findings of the theologians to imagine the different situations those first Christians found themselves in, and how they responded.

Our second reading, this morning was from our layer 3, Paul, writing to the Church in Rome around about the year 57. Paul's letters reveal the deep, prayerful thinking that was taking place concerning the death, and resurrection of Jesus and the resulting life in the Spirit. While Paul seems to allude to Jesus's teaching from time to time, he didn't know Jesus during his lifetime. His encounter was with the risen Christ, and his letters are about life in the post-resurrection Spirit of Christ which liberates those first Jewish Christians from the Law of Moses. He equates life under the Law with life according to the flesh. Life in the Spirit is entirely different. Instead of attempting, and failing, to conform to the demands of the Law, life in the Spirit means an inner compulsion from the heart that leads to life and peace. In the middle part of the reading, Paul distinguishes those who 'live according to the flesh', and 'those who live according to the Spirit'. Did an early Christian preacher think about these sorts of ideas and relate them to Jesus's parable, turning it into an allegory? There are those who live in the flesh, who have shallow roots, and those in the good soil, or the life of the Spirit? This is speculation, but it is not without evidence, and it gives us a chance to appreciate something of the process that led to the development of our New Testament.

Let's return to the first half of today's gospel, where there is a harvest of plenty, despite setbacks. This, says Jeremias is where the parable's meaning lies. To us, it may all look so unpromising, but Jesus gives an 'unwavering assurance' that all will end well. Also, just as the end harvest is already found in the seed, 'God is carrying his beginnings on to completion'.<sup>iv</sup> We can trust in this.

The vehicle of the parable, Jesus used to convey his teaching, is life-affirming, the illustrations from the world around us, can give us confidence that there is continuity between this world and God's Kingdom. We are called to be thoroughly engaged with this world, this good earth, with its food systems, and with all people. Reading the parable with today's eyes, we might be reminded of the importance of biodiversity. The seed goes on to deliver the harvest, but it also feeds the birds, and the worms.

In 1945, some documents were discovered in Egypt, including an ancient document called the Gospel of Thomas, which is a collection of the sayings of Jesus. There is a lot of overlap between

our New Testament gospels and the Gospel of Thomas, including the parable of the sower, where the seed that fell among the thorns was eaten by 'the worm'<sup>v</sup>. Interestingly, the allegorical interpretation of the parable is not found in Thomas, which Jeremias sees as strengthening the view that it does not originate from Jesus.

The maintaining of habitat and the feeding of the birds, the worms and other microscopic creatures found in the soil is what, we are coming to realise, creates 'good soil', something we are now recognising has not been supported by our post-war methods of farming, which through pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers is not only killing the soil, long-term, but also the rivers. We are now learning the importance of the thistles, thorns, birds and worms, all part of God's good Creation that sustains our lives and undergirds our relationships. Rewilding returns the land to its natural state, restoring the natural food chains, and cooling the temperatures. Achieving this on a large scale will mean something of a revolution in our farming methods, and our diets, with much less dependence on livestock. George Monbiot discusses this in his well-researched book 'Regenesi's'<sup>vi</sup>

Are we now in a time of leaving a few cul-de-sacs behind, of moving from monocultures to biodiversity; from depleted soil to good soil; from judgement to hopeful confidence; from the law of sin and death to life in the Spirit? That is a question I will leave you to ponder.

## We affirm our faith

*We stand and at home, if able, we turn to look in the direction of Church, to affirm our faith in God, revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit:*

### Affirmation of Faith

Deacon: Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**All: We believe and trust in him.**

Deacon: Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**All: We believe and trust in him.**

Deacon: Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**All: We believe and trust in him.**

Deacon: This is the faith of the Church.

**All: This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

## INTERCESSIONS from Helen

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith.

We thank you for the universal church that has grown from small seeds. We thank you especially for the Christians from other countries who've come to All Saints over the years – from Australia, the Caribbean, South Africa, Zimbabwe, the Congo, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Ghana, Iran, Sri Lanka, Germany, Poland, Romania, Ukraine – and others I haven't met or have forgotten! We know that in everything you have a purpose. Help us to discover your purpose in bringing us all together here in this church, help us to learn from each other and to follow the promptings of your Holy Spirit as you work for our good and for the good of all those we meet. We ask you for help in finding church wardens to support David and all of us.

Bless Anne while she's our Acting Bishop; David, while he's on holiday; Tariro in all her responsibilities while he's away – and strengthen all your Church in the service of Christ, that those who confess your name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord in your mercy.....

We pray for wisdom for our government and opposition parties, as they think about how to respond to armed conflicts around the world, how to respond to people coming to this country from other countries; how to respond to the rising cost of living and consequent strikes, and above all how to respond to climate change, as it begins to affect our daily lives and already severely affects lives in other countries.

Give wisdom to all in authority; and direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and of peace; that we may honour one another, and seek the common good.

Lord, in your mercy.....

As the summer holidays approach, we pray for the end of term in schools, colleges and universities and ask you to make your presence known to those who'll be receiving exam results, to those thinking about their futures, those going on holiday and those who'll be struggling to make ends meet, without a holiday.

Give grace to us, our families and friends, and to all our neighbours, that we may serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us.

Lord in your mercy...

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit, remembering especially Adrjan Kozlowski, who has recently come out of hospital, Lynn Busfield, Ruth Tetlow, Gill Parkin, Tricia Howard, Wendy Turner, Dorothy and Norman Brookes – and others known to us, as we pause to commit them to your care.

give them courage and hope in their troubles;  
and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy.....

Hear us as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ, We give you thanks for the life of Margaret Shepherd, who died on Wednesday. We thank you for her teaching career, for her book about the history of All Saints, for the papers she wrote for the Kings Heath Local History

Society, for her prayers for all of us and her long perspective on life at All Saints since she first came here in the 1940s. We pray for all those who knew her and especially for the residents and staff at Highbury Court, where she lived.

We also pray for the family and friends of Brian Clucas as they prepare for his funeral.

According to your promises, grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.  
Lord in your mercy

Rejoicing in the fellowship of [*N and of*] all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love.

Merciful Father.....accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

*We stand for* THE PEACE

Deacon: Peace to you from God who is our Father. Peace from Jesus Christ who is our peace. Peace from the Holy Spirit who gives us life. The peace of the triune God be always with you. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

HYMN [O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness](#)

1. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;  
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;  
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,  
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.

2. Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness:  
high on his heart he will bear it for thee,  
comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,  
guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

3. Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness  
of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine:  
truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,  
these are the off'rings to lay on his shrine.

4. These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,  
he will accept for the name that is dear;  
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,  
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

*(words: John Samuel Bewley Monsell; music: Melody from the 'Rheinhardt MS', Üttingen [1754])*



*The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's Prayer (below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared.*

## We tell the story of salvation

Priest: The Lord be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Creator God, you made this earth of paths and rocks and thorns and soil. To Abraham you promised fertile land and to Moses you offered blessing and freedom. In your prophets you called your people to cultivate the promises of your land and cherish the blessings of your freedom. In Jesus you gave us your superabundant soil. In his cross he was ploughed and broken open, that we might be restored, replenished and renewed, to be planted again as your good seed in this earth. And so we gladly thank you, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, singing the hymn of your unending praise:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Abundant God, from your good soil you make enough and plenty to feed and inspire all your children, and out of your earth you bring the glory of resurrection life. Come among us now through the power of your Spirit, that we may be transformed into your likeness and that these gifts of bread and wine may become for us the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

*A bell is rung*

After supper he took the cup. Again, he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Deacon: Great is the mystery of faith:  
**All: Christ has died,  
Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.**

Transforming God, where your children are in the grip of evil and bewilderment, bring them your courage and clarity. Where they are without deep root and facing trouble or persecution, give them patience and endurance. Where they are burdened by the cares of the world and tempted by the lure of wealth, offer them wisdom and understanding. And where they bear fruit and yield, make that fruit so plentiful that it may feed all in your world who hunger for faith, for hope or for love. Sanctify your groaning creation, that your universe may breathe your breath and be filled with your life anew, that we may love what you love and do what you would do, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, ever one God.  
**Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Deacon: As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:  
**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 the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Priest: We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.  
**All: Though we are many, we are one body.  
For we all share in one bread.**  
Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you. Eat in remembrance that he died and now lives for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

*We sing:* [Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,](#)  
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,  
grant us peace.

*We pause to remember all who pray at home, then share the bread, now for us the body of Christ.*

### *SONG during Communion*

#### Broken for me

*Broken for me, broken for you,  
the body of Jesus, broken for you.*

1. He offered his body, he poured out his soul;  
Jesus was broken, that we might be whole.

2. Come to my table and with me dine;  
eat of my bread and drink of my wine.

3. This is my body given for you;  
eat it remembering I died for you.

4. This is my blood I shed for you,  
for your forgiveness, making you new.  
*(words & music: Janet Lunt)*

1. Author of life divine, who hast a table spread,  
furnished with mystic wine, and everlasting bread,  
preserve the life thyself hast giv'n,  
preserve the life thyself hast giv'n, and feed and train us up for heaven.

2. Our needy souls sustain with fresh supplies of love,  
till all thy life we gain, and all thy fullness prove,  
and, strengthened by thy perfect grace,  
and, strengthened by thy perfect grace, behold without a veil thy face.  
*(words: Charles Wesley; music: J D Edwards)*

## We are sent out

### *We pray*

**Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that, when we were still far off, you met us in your son and brought us home. Dying and living he declared your love, gave us grace and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## THE BLESSING

*[May]* God the Father humble *us*; God the Son uphold *us*; God the Holy Spirit inspire *us*, and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among *us* and remain with *us* always. **Amen.**

SONG: [You shall go out with joy](#) (*sing 3 times*)

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,  
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you.  
There'll be shouts of joy and the trees of the field  
shall clap, shall clap their hands.

And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and you'll go out with joy.

*(words & music: Steffi Geiser Rubin & Stuart Dauermann)*

Priest: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**

## This evening, 6.30pm Iona Service



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<sup>i</sup> Joachim Jeremias: *Rediscovering the Parables* 1966, SCM Press

<sup>ii</sup> Jeremias *Rediscovering the Parables* p.120.

<sup>iii</sup> Jeremias *Rediscovering the Parables* p.10.

<sup>iv</sup> Jeremias *Rediscovering the Parables* p.122

<sup>v</sup> Jeremias *Rediscovering the Parables* p.119

<sup>vi</sup> George Monbiot *Regenesi* 2022, Allen Lane