

2022 7TH AUGUST – WORSHIP AT HOME – UNFAILING TREASURE

Dear friends,

I hope that you are able to find time to relax and enjoy the summer and haven't been embroiled in all the delays around travel that we have been hearing about lately. Ian and I were able to get away a couple of weeks ago and went to Rutland – what a lovely – and quiet – area it is.

This week we see what it is that we value and the values which drive us – a challenge to understand what real treasure is, and that it comes from God.

Every blessing to you all, *Margaret*

Call to worship:

As we come into God's presence, let us open our hands and hearts – let us invite God to fill us with the treasure of his Spirit - the treasure of his compassion for others, and the treasure of his unconditional love for us.

God of all, we thank you for being here with each one of us.

We thank you that in your presence we find heavenly riches beyond any earthly treasure.

As we come to worship, help us to seek and find the treasure of your kingdom, so that we can live our earthly lives holding treasure that will transform us – right here and now.

We put our hope in the Lord; the Lord is our protector and our help, the root of our gladness – and in the Lord we trust.

May your constant love be with us, Lord, as we put our hope in you. **Amen.**

The words to Born in song! Written by Brian Hoare [b. 1935] Singing the Faith 21

1 Born in song! God's people have always been singing.

Born in song! Hearts and voices raised.

So today we worship together, God alone is worthy to be praised.

2 Praise to God! For he is the one who has made us.

Praise to God! We his image bear.

Heaven and earth are full of his glory, let creation praise him everywhere.

3 Christ is King! He left all the glory of heaven.

Christ is King! Born to share in our pain,

crucified for sinners sinning, risen, exalted, soon to come again.

4 Sing the song! God's Spirit is poured out among us.

Sing the song! He has made us anew.

Ev'ry member part of the Body; given his power, his will to seek and do.

5 Tell the world! All power to Jesus given.

Tell the world! He is with us always.

Spread the word, that all may receive him; every tongue confess and sing his praise.

6 Then the end! Christ Jesus shall reign in his glory.

Then the end of all earthly days.

Yet above the song will continue; all his people still shall sing his praise.

Prayers followed by the Lord's Prayer:

Right here, right now, we worship you. We come before you - wherever we are we are still together in our love of you. We come to share in the riches of your glory – to feel, and see, and hear, and know that you are always with us. You are not seated high on some heavenly throne – not ensconced in castle or palace – not protected by guards and walls. We know, Lord God, that you are here with us, in our midst – alive, living and being amongst us.

We worship and adore you, Lord, here and now and for always. **Amen.**

Lord, we love you and long to be like you, but we are weak and still strive in life for things to make us comfortable – for things that give us pleasure. We save in life, if we are able, for rainy days and stormy times – we work to make life better, always hoping that it will make us happier as well. We burden ourselves with so much so-called 'treasure' that we cannot often see the wood for the trees. We work to give enjoyment, but we struggle along the way.

Forgive us, Lord, and help us in a moment of reflection to see the damage our 'treasure' can cause if it becomes the centre of our living.

Forgive us in our busy-ness to store up treasure here on earth, if we lose sight of the treasure that is you in the here and now.

Forgive us if in our busy-ness we fail to share your treasure with family, friend, foe, and neighbour. **Amen.**

God, in his love for us, offers us, each of us, every one of us, forgiveness for our sins – things done and undone, things spoken and unspoken.

God, in his love for us, offers assurance that our sins – yes, even ours, - are forgiven.

So let us go this day sharing the treasure that is God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Our hearts overflow with praise and thanksgiving as we realise that God is not 'out there', distant and seated high above us, but is here with us this moment – not distant but close.

Our hearts overflow as God's being infuses ours – as God's love warms us, shelters and comforts us – as God's Spirit gives us strength and hope, passion and purpose.

Our hearts overflow as we know we need not fear God – that his treasure is closer than we can feel, and deeper than we can know – wider than we can see and more real than we can imagine.

Our hearts overflow to know that the place we have searched for is this place – and it is here with us right now.

Our hearts overflow with praise and thanksgiving as we share together the words which Jesus taught us: 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Luke 12: 32-40: NIV

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly, I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or

toward daybreak. But understand this – if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Comment:

We are well into a long section of dialogue [12:1 to 13:21]. Jesus is speaking and responding to questions from people who already follow him – from others who oppose him – also those who are still trying to make up their minds. He has urged his hearers to seek God’s kingdom; now he tells his disciples not to be afraid because God will give them the kingdom, drawing them into a supportive band of brothers and sisters in pursuit of the treasure which God holds before them. This treasure is both here now and off in the distance, but it is theirs because they have set their hearts on it.

But although the kingdom is a gift, it does not come to the passive. As we seek God’s kingdom rather than our own material well-being, we need to be alert to what God is doing. The master [Jesus] came and found the disciples ready, so he served them and met their needs. This is indeed good news for the poor, the ministry in which Jesus has been engaged in throughout. But the banquet scene also has an eye for the future, on the great feast which the Messiah will throw for his faithful people when the kingdom of God comes into its fullness. Then those social hierarchies which are so precious to the Pharisees will be meaningless – and, by implication, they should be meaningless now among God’s people.

Then, still on the theme of being ready, Jesus shifts the focus from the coming of the master to the coming of a thief – a coming which is always unexpected. Again, both present and future are in view. His first coming has taken the Pharisees and the crowds by surprise.

Will his second coming catch his followers – catch us – by surprise?

Meditation of one of the crowd listening to Jesus. [Nick Fawcett – An Amazing Man C]:

A purse that never wears out – now I like the sound of that!

Just imagine! Pop your hand in your pocket, anytime, anywhere, and there it is – cash on the nail, as much as you need. This guy’s really talking!

Only he isn’t really, for his sums don’t add up. ‘Sell your possessions,’ he says, ‘and give alms.’

Well, I’m sorry, but that’s no way to invest for the future. You’ll end up, more likely, with nothing, relying on alms yourself – and we can’t all do that, can we, for who would there be left to give?

So what is he saying? Don’t tell me: it’s all about letting go of money and possessions – about understanding what’s of real value, able to satisfy the soul. Most of all, it’s about receiving through giving – a generous heart as opposed to an avaricious spirit.

I was afraid you’d say that, for though I can accept it happily enough in theory, in practice it’s another matter, being neither *my* way nor that of the world.

We want treasure now *and* later – rewards in this life and in the life to come – our hearts torn between God and self – heaven and earth – *both/and* rather than *either/or*.

I’ll give Jesus this, he’s put his finger on the problem, but that’s the easy part. It needs us to change, deep within, if we are to find the answer; our hearts to be realigned, turned round.

Can he see to that too? I wonder.

Prayer:

Loving Lord, we mean to be generous, but find it hard to let go – we mean to respond to others, but struggle to put *them* first, *self* second. For all our talk of treasures in heaven it’s treasures on earth which consume us, even as we consume them!

Work within us, Lord, and overcome our greed.

Help us to see beyond the flesh to the spirit, in a world where so many, all too literally, can hardly keep body and soul together. **Amen.**

We pray

For those living on the edge, in fear of the future – bless them with a deepening sense of hope and trust in you.

For those caught up in the ways of the world, relying on worldly treasure – give them a blessing of release and joy in you.

For those battling with ill-health – give them the blessing of strengthening hope and healing.

For all who have the responsibility of feeding your flock – give them your blessing of wisdom and strength. Lord, you watch and protect.

Strengthen all who are in need with an unshakeable trust in you – give them a glimpse of the treasures that are theirs when they put their hope in you. **Amen.**

The words to ‘Your hand, O God’ written by Edward Hayes Plumtre [1821-1891] Singing the Faith 692

1 Your hand, O God, has guided your flock from age to age;
the wondrous tale is written, full clear, on every page;
our forebears owned your goodness, and we their deeds record;
and both of this bear witness: one Church, one faith, one Lord.

2 Your heralds brought glad tidings to greatest, as to least;
they summoned all to hasten and share the great King’s feast;
the gospel of redemption, sin pardoned, right restored,
was all in this enfolded: one Church, one faith, one Lord.

3 Your mercy will not fail us, nor leave your work undone;
with your right hand to help us, the victory will be won;
and then, by all creation, your name shall be adored,
and this shall be our anthem: one Church, one faith, one Lord.

Closing Prayer and Blessing:

Lord Jesus, as Abraham went into the unknown, we go from here not knowing what will be round the next corner, or what you may ask of us. May our faith be unshakeable as we share and trust in your promise. May we remain watchful and ready to answer your knock.

Let the goodness of Christ pulse through our bodies.

Let the power of the Spirit flow through our souls.

Let the wonder of God resonate through our minds.

Glory be to God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – now and for all eternity. **Amen.**