



EMMANUEL CHURCH – WORSHIP FOR 26TH JULY 2020



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 26th July.
If you are able, watch this small service via the Emmanuel Church website: www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk.

Welcome and Opening Prayer: by Pat Bennett

Lord, in this shared time, we offer ourselves to each other.
We offer our understandings and insights – not to dominate or overthrow one another but that we ourselves might be challenged and changed.
We offer our emotions and experiences – not in self-indulgence but that through honesty and openness we may find and give encouragement and comfort.
We offer our skills and talents – not because of pride in our abilities but in a joyful recognition and sharing of your overflowing bounty.
And as we celebrate and offer our common humanity, the very flesh and fabric of our lives, may you, the Incarnate One, be once again embodied here in our individuality and our community. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 13: 31-33 ‘The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Parable of the Yeast’

³¹ He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² 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.’ ³³ 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.’

Address: ‘Cakes and Kingdoms’

Prayers for God’s World and the Lord’s Prayer:

We pray this day for people the world over affected by the coronavirus;
for those sick, for those healing, for those caring, for those grieving.
Lord God, by our presence and compassion: **MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME.**

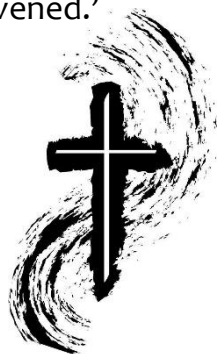
We pray this day for people whose jobs have gone or pay reduced; whose homes are under threat or lost; for those who use Foodbanks, charities, whose lives and families know fear.
Lord God, by our reaching out and our affinity: **MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME.**

We pray this day for people known to us affected by loneliness and solitude; for those cut off from family and friends; for those affected by relationships that have come to an end.
Lord God, by our being alongside and company: **MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME.**

We pray this day for children and young people everywhere; whose education has been interrupted or ended; for the youngest struggling to understand life as it now is.
Lord God, by our listening and nurture of those of all ages: **MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME.**

These prayers are offered in Jesus’ name, whose love knew no bounds of size or limitation, and in whose life glimpses of God’s kingdom are seen. **AMEN. OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN...**

Blessing: May the love and power of God go with us today and every day. And may the blessing of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, **AMEN.**



Address: 'Cakes and Kingdoms'



Well after last week's parable of the wheat and weeds, this week we have two tiny parables. The parable of the tiny mustard seed, and then the smallest of all the parables: Jesus comparing the Kingdom of God to leaven, or yeast. I've never attempted to make bread, but I did once make a cake which called for self-raising flour – which has baking powder in rather than yeast but the rising effect is similar; except that I ignored the self-raising flour instruction and used plain flour instead. Now, on the downside, my wife's birthday cake, for so it was, was disappointing to an astonishing degree, but on the plus side, I immediately had invented the 'Victoria biscuit'. I am still available for Bake Off if needed!

These two parables sit rather well together. The tiny mustard seed exploding into a large plant; the leaven expanding. In the parable three measures of flour is not a small amount – in metric terms it would be about 40 litres of flour, or enough bread for about 150 people. So, the tiny yeast somehow, inevitably, irresistibly, leavens this massive amount of flour and a huge amount of bread is the result. An explosion of growth.

These parables are saying something about what the Kingdom of God is like: and the imagery is of fulness, incredible fulness; things overflowing, abundance. They remind me of the feeding of the five thousand, where incredibly from the tiny sharing of bread and fish, thousands are fed and there are baskets and baskets of leftovers. Or Jesus in one of the Resurrection appearances telling the disciples from the shore to throw their nets again, and there are so many caught they can barely be hauled in. Time and again in the Gospels there are these signs, or miracles, or reminders about how the Kingdom of God exceeds expectations. God's love, more powerful than we can conceive, breaking down barriers, restoring relationships, and bringing about change. God's forgiveness more profound than any human equivalent – taking our guilt, regret, our mistakes and God saying: 'it's OK – these sins do not define you any longer... live in my love, and be free'. If we find ourselves thinking narrowly about God's kingdom, with limits as to whom we should love, whom God loves, who are our charity should reach, what might be achieved in this world – then we must be prepared to have our tiny expectations explode into life.

So, if Jesus speaks in these terms about God's kingdom, where do we sit in all this? Maybe as a church a helpful approach is to remember that God's kingdom, does not *begin* with the church. All God's creation, heaven and earth is, in a sense, the beginning of God's kingdom; the life of Christ, and of course all that's to come. And we shouldn't forget, too, that the church itself is not the *end*, the destination point, of God's kingdom either – it would be the height of arrogance to think it was! No, perhaps our part is in the in between, the movement and growth of God's kingdom. *That's* where we can play a part, *that's* what we can share in. Just as the leaven leavens the dough and the bread rises, so that many are fed, you and I can share in the process of God's kingdom becoming a greater reality in the places we live, and in the lives we touch. And if we do, maybe it will be by our words and actions, a little more of God's kingdom might be seen.



When St. Augustine was asked what the Kingdom of God had to do with the church – fair question – he said that the church's role is simply to 'refer to God's love'. That would be my prayer for our church and every church for that matter. And from one old saint to a current one, Desmond Tutu once said: "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world". I like that, and from a man who knew what a seemingly impossible task looked like! The mustard seed and the yeast remind us of the small part we play in the work of God...but how God takes small acts of love, magnifies and increases them, and blesses them in ways we can't hope to imagine.