

Worship for (a scattered) Hornsea URC on the 19th July

Prepared by Suzanne Punter – from St Columba's Church, York

Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD thunders over the mighty
waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of
Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes
of lightning.
The voice of the LORD shakes the desert;
the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as King forever.
May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!



Psalm 29

Hymn (R&S131) [The Voice of God goes out](#)

1. The voice of God goes out to all the world;
His glory speaks across the universe.

The Great King's herald cries from star to star:
'With power, with justice, he will walk his way'

2. The Lord has said 'Receive my messenger,
My promise to the world, my pledge made flesh,
A lamp to every nation, light from light:
'With power, with justice, he will walk his way'

3. The broken reed he will not trample down,
Nor set his heel upon the dying flame.
He binds the wounds, and health is in his hand:
'With power, with justice, he will walk his way'

4. Anointed with the Spirit and with power,
He comes to crown with comfort all the weak,
To show the face of justice to the poor:
'With power, with justice, he will walk his way'

5. His touch will bless the eyes that darkness held,
The lame shall run, the halting tongue shall sing,
And prisoners laugh in light and liberty:
'With power, with justice, he will walk his way'

Luke Connaughton (1917 – 79)

Prayers

God, the Father,
you speak words and light and life into being.
Son of God,
you flesh the Word in compassion and feeling.

Holy Spirit,
you liberate our tongue-tied souls
and enable us to hear your Word of life
and to share it with a world that longs to hear.

Trinity of love speak. Your servant is listening.

Receive the worship we offer,
claim us as your people,
and set us free to honour you today.

We are slow to hear your word,
and reluctant to speak your truth and love.
Forgive our stoney ground, our shallow soil.
Sow your seed in us and in your world,
and let us reap an abundance of forgiveness and mercy,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lords Prayer

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

Readings Isaiah 55: 10-13

10As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

11so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

12You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

13Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."

Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

1That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.

2Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

3Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed.

4As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.

6But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

8Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop-a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

9Whoever has ears, let them hear."

18"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

19When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

20The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.

21But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

22The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

23But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Hymn (R&S) 319

[Thanks to God whose word was spoken](#)

Thanks to God whose Word was spoken
in the deed that made the earth.

His the voice that called a nation,
his the fires that tried her worth.

God has spoken, God has spoken:
praise him for his open word.

Thanks to God whose word was written
in the Bible's sacred page,
record of the revelation
showing God to every age.

God has spoken, God has spoken:
praise him for his open word.

Thanks to God whose word is answered
by the Spirit's voice within.

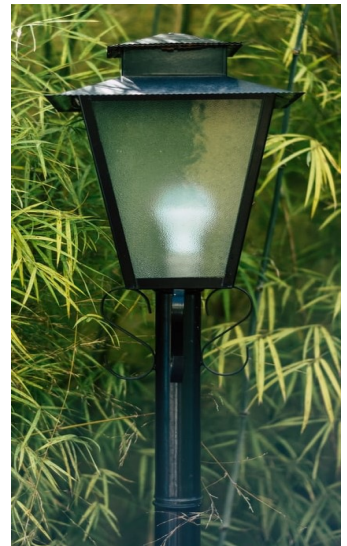
Here we drink of joy unmeasured,

life redeemed from death and sin.
God is speaking, God is speaking:
praise him for his open word.

Sermon

Lock-down has provided opportunity for lots of reading and re-reading, and has given me a chance to sneak again the wardrobe for a visit to CS Lewis' Narnia. A particularly wonderful moment is in the first book of the series when the great lion Aslan created the world of Narnia. In the creation stories of the bible, God creates by speaking: *God said " Let there be light."* But Narnia was created by singing! Aslan sings, and the mountains appear, he sings some more, and soil and vegetation cover the rocks, he sings again and animals appear.

As the story goes, some children from our world have come into Narnia with a wicked witch who has a broken off piece of a London lamp-post in her hand. Very soon after all the creative singing, she throws this chunk of iron and it lands in the newly created grass. When the children next pass the spot, they see 'a perfect little model of a lamp-post, about three feet high and lengthening, and thickening in proportion, as they watch it.'



A little later, the hungry children find that all they have to eat is a bag of toffee sweets. Remembering the lamp-post, they plant one of the sweets, and next morning, enjoy the fruits of their toffee tree, 'not exactly like toffee – softer for one thing, and juicy – but like fruit which reminds one of toffee.'

It doesn't last, this super-fecundity, even in the magical world of Narnia, but while the last notes of Aslan's song still linger in the air, the world cannot help but be miraculously fruitful.



That's the world that the parable of the sower is about. God's word has been spoken and made flesh in Christ. The song has been sung. And all *will* be fruitful. It will yield a ridiculously lavish harvest – in spite of the patches of poor soil, and the ravenous birds and the scorching sun – thirty – sixty – one hundred-fold, far more than any farmer would normally expect. But we aren't talking agriculture here, we are talking about the dawning Kingdom of God's. We are talking about God's fruitful world.

This is the wedding of Cana all over again, with one hundred and fifty extra gallons of wine. This is the feeding of the five thousand, with basket-loads of leftovers. This isn't so much a parable about sowing seeds at all; it's the bumper crop at the end that holds the secret. The sewing represented by the life and teaching of Jesus is our assurance of the coming fruitful and abundant Kingdom.

We hear echos of our Old Testament reading.

As the rain and the snow come down from Heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread for the eater,

so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I propose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

And if Jesus' hearers point out that all the preaching of God's word to date, the sowing of the seeds of the Kingdom, the word of the prophets, the ministry of John the Baptist, that none of this has produced the kind of crop he is talking about, well, yes, the stony ground and shallow soil and hard hearts are all there, *but the Kingdom will come in all its abundance anyway.* It is God in Christ who has spoken. The song has been sung. There will be living lamp-posts, and toffee trees, and crops that give a yield a hundred times what is sown. God's creating, life-giving, song is still ringing in the air. Justice *will* roll down like the waters, and peace like an ever flowing stream.

Here is an enterprise that has no promise of success, except that God has spoken. No other credentials are needed. No security required.

We are living through strange weeks in which the frailty of otherwise seemingly secure assurances have foundered. An invisible virus has brought formerly robust businesses down, commandeered the entire attention of government, threatened our health and our lives, and altered 'business as usual' for some time to come. Will any of us be able to be at all blase about the simple act of dining in a restaurant or riding on a bus? Will we ever shake hands again, or crowd with strangers into a cinema or stadium?

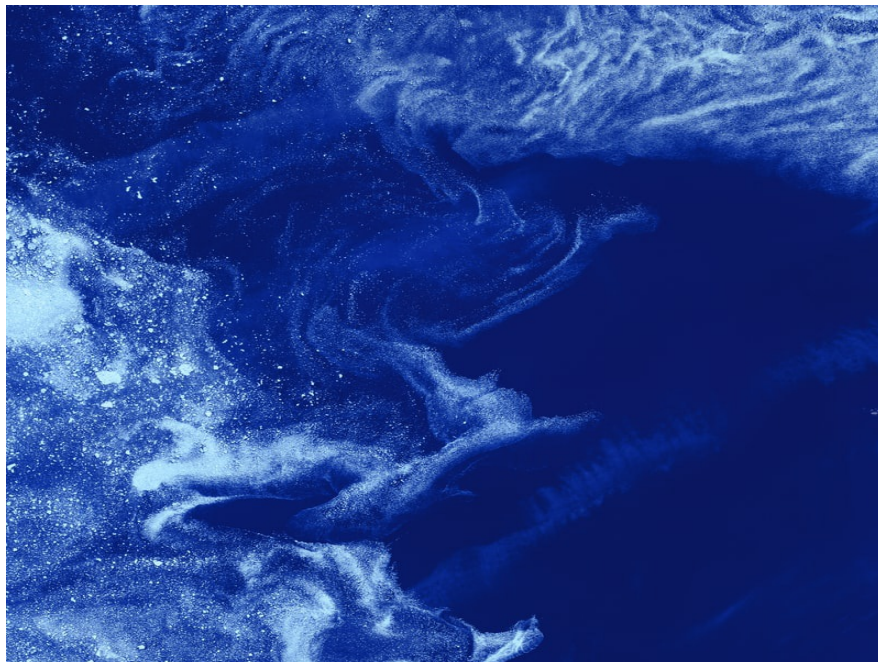
It might be a viral pandemic this time, a natural disaster next, an economic hitch somewhere, a war somewhere else. It might be an international computer crash. An act of racial brutality can shatter what peace we thought we had. We have had very clearly demonstrated to us that the economic, technological and social shell with which we surround ourselves is very fragile, and we are very vulnerable.

And yet here we have a middle eastern carpenter, millennia ago, with a message of love, and forgiveness and trust – soft commodities, nothing like the seemingly much more solid structures that we see can crumble so easily – an enterprise surely going nowhere. But outlasting empires and economics, slowly but with divine assurance building a Kingdom, welcoming sinners, healing men and women and even nations. Seeds sown in hope and harvested with rejoicing.

When Christ the Sower sows, bad soil does not prevent the abundant crop of God's dawning Kingdom. A plague will not stop it. Discouraged and small congregations will not stop it. A society that no longer cares to hear the Word or accept its significance will not stop it.

Anything can take root in this soil and grow, not only lamp-stands and toffee sweets, but even such unlikely candidates for fruitfulness as you and me, the creaking church and the ailing world.

Here is an enterprise that has no promise of success, except that God has spoken. God's word *is* abroad in the world. Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.



Prayers of intercession

Offer your own prayers, remembering to include:

- our fellowship at Hornsea URC, and our sisters and brothers in other churches.
- all who are ill, and those who care for them
- all who have suffered the social and economical effects of the Covid-19 pandemic
- the wise and compassionate shaping of a post-Covid society,

Hymn

(R&S) 451

[You shall go out with joy](#)

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.