

Newington Methodist Church
Church Lane, Newington, Sittingbourne, ME9 7JT
Minister Rev Robert Zachar
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Sunday 26^h July

The church building at Newington remains closed but as a congregation we continue in worship and prayer.

See "Bring you chair and bible"

Bible verse

Jesus says: The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast

Matthew 13:33 (*Common English Bible*)

Prayer

Lord our God and heavenly Father, your Kingdom is breaking into this world. It is a privilege to see this happening. Every time we see truth, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation in the name of Jesus we know it is happening. This broken world, all those lives lived in fear and pain can be transformed into a new creation and celebrate all you are to us. Let all that has breath praise the Lord, let all creation shout in joy, let us celebrate God our father and his Son Jesus Christ. Amen

Notices:

For Sunday service 10:30 am follow the link on www.nkmethodists.org.uk worship at home. This coming Sunday the circuit service will be led by Rev Naomi Oates. Next Sunday 2nd August, will be led by Rev. Robin Selmes.

- The minister will be away from 27th July – 13th August. Notices will be done by Michael. Please contact Michael if you have any notices. Michael is also a contact person in general for these weeks.

- **When are we opening our church?** The church council will meet on 17th August 2 pm. We will have to use the ZOOM platform for this meeting. The agenda will be to approve the risk assessment and set the date for our reopening. Please put this in your calendar. Michael will circulate the risk assessment document soon.
- **“Bring your chair and bible”** every Sunday 3:00 – 3:30 pm at Sittingbourne Methodist church, in the front garden. Please come and join in. At our first service we had 14 people. We stood in a gentle drizzle but the time was good. Listening to Gods word and saying our prayers lifted up our spirits and gave us a joy to see each other face to face.

This is the plan:

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|---------------------------|------------------------|
| ○ 26 th July | RZ |
| ○ 2 nd August | Richard W. and Tony B. |
| ○ 9 th August | Martin Smith |
| ○ 16 th August | RZ |
| ○ 23 August | volunteer ? |
| ○ 30 August | volunteer ? |

These are regular on line meetings on ZOOM. You can join in via computer or phone.

- **Sunday morning chat and prayer 9am**
 - Dial 00442034815240
 - Meeting ID 83903061413 Password: 265946
- **Bible study** is not happening during August.
- **Prayer meeting** Fridays 10 am Meeting Password: 558684
https://zoom.us/join/attendee/tJwuciorTsvO96jEWZmrcTOtzljyKLN0w/ics?user_id=HJb3zyuSS5-YIXmq1RLdQw

Reflection *Gen 29: 15-29, Psalm 128, Rom 8:26-39, Matthew 13: 31- 33, 44-52*

Parables of the mustard seed, yeast, treasure, pearl, net and treasures new and old

Imagine a box. If I shake it you know there's something inside. If you want to know what's in it you need to take additional action. Go and open the box, ask a question etc. That's simple. This is true about the parables. They are like that box, you hear/read them and you can sense there is something inside. It wants time and energy to find out because you need to look inside. That is one of the purposes why Jesus spoke in parables. Not everyone wants to make an effort and invest their time and energy and perhaps risk getting involved and being seen. A bit like Moses passing by a burning bush. God wanted to see if there is some curiosity in Moses, an explorer spirit, researchers mind. Look at Exodus 3: 3-4.

Parables are for everyone, the message inside is for those who are prepared to make an extra effort. Still simple enough, isn't it? But this can become that tiny difference which changes an entire life. It moves from knowledge to wisdom. We only can move if we choose to follow Jesus's invitation.

In Matthew 13 there are several boxes to explore. A week ago we explored the parable of the weeds. We said that on our journey with God, we have to be alert as there will always be things which can be classed as evil. They grow unnoticed and often only God can help us to recognise them. They can even grow in our own lives, as we sometimes open ourselves up to things we do not recognise as such. Some of these are so interwoven we are not in a capacity to differentiate. We have to learn to use the wisdom from above. (see James 3:13-18 wisdom from above) One of my favourite Bible passages speaks into this beautifully: Hebrews 11: 12-14 *"God's word is living, active and sharper than any two edged sword. It penetrates to the point that it separates the soul from the spirit and the joints from the marrow. It's able to judge the heart's thoughts and intentions."*

Today's lectionary leads through the rest of chapter 13. It is a set of short parables which Jesus uses to explain what the Kingdom of God is like. It is important to understand these principles. For our own sake as well as for those who are still seeking. The Bible particularly emphasises that we are strangers in this world and citizens of the kingdom of God. We need to know the legislation of the realm we belong to. The parables of the mustard seed, yeast, treasure, pearl, net and treasures new and old. It is quite a list. Jesus is teaching that:

The Kingdom of God grows from a small seed or a little piece of yeast.

From the time the Good news is proclaimed and accepted it grows. The process of repentance, forgiveness and restoration is positive. It has the potential to heal. It can replace all false hopes and let us grow into a new person. But this growth has to respect the schedule. We may sometimes simulate the growth and make things happen artificially but the spiritual laws of growth are settled. Repent, believe and live free. There are no shortcuts. The Bible is not joking when it states that we are all sinners and we all need forgiveness. It is simple.

We have to have our priorities right. The parables about the treasure and the pearl. We struggle so much to honour our priorities. We try hard but no matter how much we try, we always fail to keep them. We discipline and train ourselves and make our lives so hard. But it still leaves us unsatisfied, because there will always be something we could not quite manage. Jews had the Law. It was their no. 1 priority. They tried so hard to follow it, yet they did not manage to keep that law! In John 3:32 Jesus said: *"let me set you free - know the truth and it will liberate you."* I believe that once you know the true value of each second of your life your priority list will shrink, or focus rightly. Only a small percentage of the UK population goes to church. If the priority is God we will surely find the time to read his word, listen to a sermon or reflection or write one for others, pray and help our neighbour. Where are all the people? It is a handful of us doing such a lot. What if there will be a rapture? Do not go on an aeroplane with a Christian pilot. He will go to the Lord and you may go down. (quote from J.Hagee) Perhaps it is time to ask the question- where is your treasure?

The Kingdom of God is for everyone -The net parable. It always amazes me how diverse the church family can be. But Jesus is teaching in this parable, that although everyone is confronted with the Good News not everyone will remain. This is hard to conceive. We like to have a pleasant, unconditional image of the Kingdom of God. But the response to the Good news is important. We are independent, free will creatures. We have our own choice to make and God respects it ultimately. The Kingdom of God is not a place where free will is ignored. Only those who choose are in it.

The Good news about the Kingdom of God **is to be shared in a whole context**. Treasures old and new are brought up. In our bible study I was sharing some thoughts from the book by Ken Ham. An Australian author, living in USA, he is the founder of an amazing project called "The Ark encounter and Creation Museum in North Kentucky. In his book, Gospel Reset, he reflects on how much the generation born from 1980's onwards need to be introduced to a full context of the Good news. There is a massive lack of misunderstanding in terminology. Our Christian jargon uses the words like God, sin, repentance, forgiveness but in the age of relativism these words have no definite meaning unless we share them in full context. That is why Jesus asked his disciples at the end of this amazing chapter: *"Have you understood all these things?"* and *"then you are trained to bring out old and new things out of the treasure box"*. He is asking you the same! Amen

This week we remember to pray for:

Beryl and Peter, Margaret N., Peter and Ian, Heather and Stephen, Elena remembering those who have died, and praying for their loved ones. Audrey, Margaret

We continue to pray for the research and testing of the new vaccine to save people's lives from COVID 19

Continue to pray for each other, for our church reopening. The services might not look like we used to. No singing, no socialising and no Holy Communion for a time. Yet we hope to experience God and his blessing even under these different circumstances equally and in full meaning.

In our prayers of intercession we look beyond our community and see the battles and needs of people in other countries. Today in the Methodist prayer handbook we pray for Christians in Northern Europe. (Methodist Church in Eurasia , Germany, Belgium, France)

We give thanks for the UMC in the Eurasia area and for its faithful ministers who make your name known in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. (*Eduard Khegay, Bishop of UMC Eurasia*)

A question to keep you thinking...

If you are to spend time with an agelastic person. Would your time go fast or slow?

The answer to last week's question: friend, teacher, healer, lion, lamb, saviour, son of God, the truth, the way, the life, shepherd, doors, bread, ..