

Worship at Home

9th August 2026

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Plymouth and Devonport Circuit

Format and editing by the South Devon Circuit

We invite you to spend time in worship, knowing that other people across the Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you

Gathering Prayers (from STF 33: Philip Jakob)

O Lord, we are always in your presence.

In you we live and move and have our being.

You hold us in the palm of your hand, and you lead us to your glory. Amen

STF 22: Come all people...

Come all people,

Come and praise your maker.

Come all people,

Come and praise your maker.

Come now and worship the Lord.

Alexander Gondo (From Psalm 100)

OT Reading: Nehemiah 8: 8-10

A Time of Confession and Forgiveness

Lord, help us, like the people in Nehemiah's day, to know there have been times when we have grieved you. We take a moment of silence for your Holy Spirit to bring those times to our minds that we might confess them to you.

Pause...

Forgive us, we pray, and help us hear your words of forgiveness... and we say: Our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Restore us in your sight, O Lord, and help us rejoice and be glad, as we receive your forgiveness and your blessing through the power of the Holy Spirit and in

*the name of Jesus, our Saviour, Redeemer and friend.
Amen*

Joy, joy, joy. Joy, joy, joy.

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy,

down in my heart, down in my heart,

down in my heart;

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy,

down in my heart, down in my heart to stay.

George William Cooke (1884-1951)

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25: 14-30

The Parable of the Bags of Gold

Message

One of Jesus' favourite ways of teaching was in parables and today's reading from Matthew's gospel is one of a series of parables when Jesus tried to help the disciples understand what the Kingdom of Heaven (*also sometimes referred to in Matthew's gospel as the Kingdom of God*) is like.

Because it is a parable, we can be sure it isn't about money, although in our western minds, it can be difficult not to see it that way. In some translations it talks about 'talents' but this too refers to money. Whilst it may seem to be referring to small amounts (1, 2 and 5), in fact, 1 talent would have been worth about 20 years of a day labourer's wage! So, whatever it is we are talking about, it is something significant.

At the beginning of the parable, we see the man going away and "*entrusting his wealth*" (v14) to his servants. So, what is God's wealth? As already noted, it's definitely not money. Perhaps stop and take a moment to think about what '*God's wealth*' might be?

Then when the man returns and the first two servants show him what they are able to give him, he says, "*Come and share your master's happiness*" [vv21 & 23], also referred to as "*joy*" in some translations. Remember, in our Old Testament

reading, Nehemiah told the people "*The joy of the Lord is your strength*" [Neh 8:10].

So, what goes wrong with the third servant? Well, he is very critical and we can be sure the parable isn't suggesting that God shares the man's nature of being hard and grasping, so there must be another answer. I think it lies with the man's attitude. His statements come from a place of fear. He even says as much himself, "*I was afraid*" [v25].

Now, mathematics is not my strong point but if you multiply any number by zero – what's the answer? Yes, ZERO! If we are afraid to do or say anything, in case we get it wrong, we have missed the point of God's loving grace, mercy and forgiveness. If we do not put anything into our relationship with God, and with others for God's sake, there is nothing for God to multiply.

The Message translation describes the third servant as the "*play it safe*" one, saying "*take it away from him*" and "*give it to the one who risked most*" [v28].

What risk have I failed to take when God's Spirit (or my conscience) has prompted me? What risk have you failed to take? Not risk in terms of risky or foolish behaviour but risk for the Gospel? Not shared the Good News, perhaps; not offered to pray with or for someone; not been honest about your faith or doubts; or not been prepared to simply connect with another human being?

I want to suggest that God's wealth is the relationship, the closeness, the intimacy you have with God. It is what God shares with us and that is the investment God makes in us, which needs to be shared with others. Or, as the 20th century Sri Lankan pastor, D T. Niles, describes '*evangelism*': it is '*one beggar sharing with another beggar where to find bread*'.

May you find the ways God is calling you to grow the Kingdom and share it with others in your life. **Amen**

Take as long as you need to pause and reflect on God's message for you.

A song of response:

STF 407: Hear the call of the Kingdom

Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your eyes to the King, let his song rise within you as a fragrant offering, of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem all who trust in His unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the Kingdom to be children of light, with the mercy of heaven, the humility of Christ; walking justly before him, loving all that is right, that the life of Christ may shine through you.

*King of Heaven, we will answer the call,
we will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power
to proclaim salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the Kingdom to reach out to the lost, with the Father's compassion in the wonder of the cross, bringing peace and forgiveness, and a hope yet to come; let the nations put their trust in Him. *King of Heaven, we will answer*

Keith Getty (b.1974), Kristyn Getty (b.1980)
& Stuart Townend (b.1963)

We bring to God our prayers for others:

Loving Lord, please help me to pray through the power of your Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus for those people, places and situations which are on my heart today.

Spend a few minutes speaking out, writing down, or bringing to God in silence your thoughts and concerns for others...

Lord Jesus, you always had time for those who were marginalised, oppressed, overlooked and ill-used. On this, the United Nations International Day of the world's indigenous peoples, I pray especially for indigenous peoples across the world.

And now Lord, I take a few moments to bring to you, the concerns I have for myself and for which I need your help...

Spend a few minutes speaking out, writing down, or bringing to God in silence the thoughts and concerns you have for yourself...

Bring your prayers together with these words:

StF 696: For the healing of the nations

For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord; for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords.

To a life of love in action, help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us, Father, into freedom, from despair the world release; that, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace. Show us how through care and goodness fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned; pride of status, race or schooling, dogmas keeping man from man.

In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator-God, have written your great name on humankind; for our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind; that, by our response and service earth its destiny may find.

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

Conclude your prayers with: **The Lord's Prayer**
Our Father...

Our closing hymn today reminds us that **the Joy of the Lord is our strength.**

If you have access to the internet, listen to The Rend Collective singing *The Joy of the Lord*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3gLeCiMJqI>

and/or StF 76:

StF 76: Give me joy in my heart

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising.

Give me joy in my heart, I pray.

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,

Keep me praising 'til the break of day.

*Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna to the King of kings.*

*Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna to the King of kings.*

**Give me peace in my heart,
keep me resting ... *Sing hosanna...***

**Give me love in my heart,
keep me serving ... *Sing hosanna...***

**Give me light in my heart,
keep me shining ... *Sing hosanna...***

Anonymous

A prayer of blessing

May you know the love, joy and hope of the Lord in all you do; and share that same love, joy and hope with all those you meet this week.

*And may the Lord bless you and keep you,
may the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
may the Lord turn His face toward you,
and give you peace, God's peace, which passes all understanding, and may that peace keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus, now and evermore. **Amen***

To raise awareness of the needs of Indigenous Peoples, every 9 August commemorates the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, chosen in recognition of the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations held in Geneva in 1982.

"There are an estimated 476 million Indigenous Peoples in the world living across 90 countries. They make up less than 6 per cent of the world's population, but account for at least 15 per cent of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures.

Indigenous Peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, Indigenous Peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples."

[From the United Nations website]

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day>

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