**Morning Praise @ Home 16th June 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Bible Reading**  **Mark 4:26 – 34**

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### Reflection from Ruth

Quite a few years ago, I went on the Diocesan pilgrimage to the Holy Land. One day Bishop Keith, who was leading our group, was delighted when he found a mustard plant and he showed us a seed - it was indeed tiny, much like a poppy seed.

And coming at the end of a series of sayings about the kingdom of God, the parable of “the seed growing secretly” is unique to the Gospel of Mark. Jesus used this parable because the people who were listening understood what it meant. It can help us as we seek to grow our little corner of the Kingdom here in Burton - no matter how small we start, no matter how few our resources - if we are aligning ourselves with God’s plan, we can see growth beyond our expectations. It’s important to remember that everything we do is related to the nature of the kingdom of God.

How the saving power of God has come into history and continues to be carried out in history is hidden from the natural eye. It seems foolish when compared with human wisdom. We who have experienced God’s divine love have the wondrous privilege and responsibility to discern and join God’s transforming work of grace that precedes us.

The message of the Gospel is the message of peace, when we share it with others, we must do so with respect and integrity. We are not meant to manipulate, control, or force people to join our community. New believers don't need to adopt a specific political view, and our outreach should not be limited to recruiting people who look or act like us. While it's important to spread the gospel through both words and actions, this parable also reminds us to consider the "ground" where the seed is sown.

In other words, the success of our mission depends as much on understanding the people and their situations as it does on the message itself. We should be mindful of the personal and cultural contexts of those we are reaching out to. On a recent ordination residential, Bishop Philip North reminded us of the theologian Karl Barth’s idea of holding the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other - this highlights the importance of paying attention to both the message we share and the world around us. As our country prepares for a general election, we need to ensure that our behaviour and opinions fit with a Gospel of peace.

Our work of growing the Kingdom includes checking and evaluating our progress with God's help. But it's also important to rest and take time for renewal, reflection, and recreation. Just like farmers protect against soil erosion, we must protect our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. How often do we fall

into the trap of burning ourselves out because we feel something has to be done?  Our efforts are meaningless unless we recognise God as our constant source of support.

And we cannot control how the Kingdom grows. We might want to see more young people, or families, or older people in churches, but unless it’s God’s plan it won’t happen.

And sometimes, that takes us out of our comfort zones into places we’re not used to. It would be so much easier if everyone just came into our church, but many people in society are not used to churches and wouldn’t come into one.  Many churches are having to go out into their communities to meet and get to know people before they will respond to invitations to come to church.

The people who Jesus told this parable to had no idea that the message of the Gospel would spread around the entire world, and no matter how hidden it might seem, how difficult and disheartening we find the world, we can take comfort from the fact that God’s plan is unfolding just as He intends it to. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Ann Rudd**

“And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers” Malachi 4:6a

Wonderful God, creator, friend, and sustainer; we thank you for nurturing us like a mother and we praise you for your care and protection that surround us like a father.

On this Fathering Sunday, we remember all the people who have nurtured us, especially the important men in our lives, those who have seen, not just with their eyes but with their heart. Hear our prayer for fathers around the world. Loving God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Open our eyes to the plight of so many fathers and mothers around the world for whom life is difficult. Help us share your love and mercy with them. Father God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**