

SERVICE SHEET
26th July
7th Sunday after Trinity



Canticle A Song of God's Blessing

**God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,**

**That your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.**

**Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.**

**O let the nations rejoice and be glad,
for you will judge the peoples righteously
and govern the nations upon earth.**

**Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.**

**Then shall the earth bring forth her increase,
and God, our own God, will bless us.**

**God will bless us,
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.**

Psalm 67

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Collect

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

New Testament

Romans 8.26-end

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 105.1-11,45b

1 O give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples.

2 Sing to him, sing praises, and tell of all his marvellous works.

3 Rejoice in the praise of his holy name; et the hearts of them rejoice who seek the Lord.

4 Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face continually.

5 Remember the marvels he has done, his wonders and the judgements of his mouth,

6 O seed of Abraham his servant, O children of Jacob his chosen.

7 He is the Lord our God; his judgements are in all the earth.

8 He has always been mindful of his covenant, the promise that he made for a thousand generation

9 The covenant he made with Abraham, the oath that he swore to Isaac,

10 Which he established as a statute for Jacob, an everlasting covenant for Israel,

11 Saying, 'To you will I give the land of Canaan to be the portion of your inheritance.'

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Gospel Reading

Matthew 13.31-33, 44-52

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.'

⁴⁴ 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ 'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' ⁵² And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

SERMON

True Value

The Hidden Treasure and the Priceless Pearl (Matt 13.44, 45-46)

One of the best shows on TV at the moment is the series of monologues by Alan Bennett called *Talking Heads*. The other night, Helen and I watched an episode entitled 'The Hand of God' in which Kristin Scott Thomas plays an antiques dealer called Celia whose business is failing. It's failing because Celia lacks what a successful antiques dealer most needs, which is a good sense of *the value of things*. She's also lacking in integrity: she's been paying an elderly neighbour inordinate attention in the hope that when the lady dies some of her rather ancient household items might find their way into her antiques shop. In the end, she is bitterly disappointed to discover that all the old lady has left her is a box of rather incidental-looking bric-a-brac, none of which looks to be of any value. There's even a small, framed drawing of a finger which Celia views with distaste and regards as next-to worthless. Well, if I went any further, I'd have to give a 'spoiler alert': but you might guess where this comically sorry little tale is heading! The thing is, not only is Celia lacking in a good sense of the value of *things*: she's also self-deluding in the value she accords *her own judgement*. In short, she's a bit of a snob. So in the end, she attributes responsibility for what happens, not to her own folly, but to the hand of God! Knowing what's of true value in life and how to recognize it is important. It affects all our priorities and the direction in life we choose to follow. So it helps to have someone of special insight—we used to call them prophets—to point us in a good direction. Jesus is one such, pre-eminently so. And according to Jesus, what is of more value than anything else is a realm of existence he calls *the kingdom of heaven*. So he teaches his followers to pray to their heavenly Father, 'Your kingdom come.'

But what is Jesus talking about? And if it's such a good thing, why is his message generating such *resistance*? For that's what happens in Matthew's story of Jesus, not least in the episodes leading up to today's reading. Again and again, he meets misunderstanding and hostility arising out of people's investment in values that don't have space for something new. So now Jesus sits in a boat by the sea, the crowds gather, and he tells a sequence of seven little stories, or parables.

The thing about parables is that *they're not explanations!* They say but they don't tell. They approach things that matter, not front-on, but indirectly, *slant-wise*, always opening up new horizons—maybe to make the hearers smile in recognition, or to pique their curiosity, or to jolt them into seeing and doing things differently.

Now, in the ancient world, including the world of Jesus, one of the things that mattered—one of the things most valued in terms of knowing how to live well—was *the getting of wisdom*. And because wisdom is something profound and challenging, it's often approached by means of pithy sayings, fables and parables. Think of the fables of Aesop! So Jesus stands in a tradition of teachers who use riddling speech, like fables and parables, to nudge people in the direction of wisdom.

But Jesus' parables aren't plucked out of thin air. No: they draw on the scriptures, including how the scriptures talk about what is of true value. And here, wisdom is understood as so valuable that it's likened to an exquisite *pearl*, and the getting of wisdom is likened to finding *hidden treasure*. So, Proverbs chapter 2 says of wisdom: 'if you seek it like silver, and search for it *as for hidden treasure*—then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God' (Prov 2.4-5). And Job 28, speaking of the unsurpassed value of wisdom, says: 'Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold ... The price of wisdom is *above pearls*' (Job 28.17-18).

Well then, lo and behold, here, among the seven parables grouped together in Matthew 13, there's a sequence of two, one of which is about finding *hidden treasure*; the other is about finding *a beautiful pearl!* So we're clearly in touch with the scriptural wisdom tradition. What's striking in Matthew, however, is that whereas in the tradition, hidden treasure and pearls are

images for *wisdom*, in the teaching of Jesus, they become images of *the kingdom of heaven*, the realm of pre-eminent wisdom. It's as if the parables are saying: the kingdom of heaven is what matters most. *That's* where true wisdom is found. That's the reality—the *realm*—Jesus makes known and within which he wants people to live: because that's where human beings find true blessing.

There's one other thing, to do with *how to respond*. The one who finds the treasure hidden in the field 'goes and *sells all that he has* and buys that field' (13.44); and the merchant who finds the pearl of great value 'went and *sold all that he had* and bought it' (13.46). In other words, being a citizen of the kingdom where God is king is a treasure so valuable and a pearl so beautiful that's its worth is beyond measure: *it's worth giving up everything for*.

Of course, even if we allow for hyperbole, giving up everything is not easy! In fact, elsewhere, Jesus says that the way to life is like going through a 'narrow gate' and walking along a 'hard road' (7.14)! Most of us are a bit like Celia in the Alan Bennett story: unable to distinguish what's of real value and go after that, because to do so we'd have to do some serious self-examination and be willing to *change*. We'd have to recognize that some of our deeply entrenched values—values that maybe we've taken for granted all our lives—are skewed or no longer adequate or just plain wrong!

So what *is* valuable in the kingdom of heaven? What is it that *really matters* and is worth giving up everything for? The answer comes in the Beatitudes: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn ... Blessed are the meek ... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice ... Blessed are the merciful ...'. That's the wide horizon of value that the kingdom of heaven opens up. And against that horizon, *every human being is of inestimable value*: you and I *matter*, black lives matter, refugees and asylum seekers matter, people who are different from us matter. Why so? Because the kingdom of heaven is the hidden treasure and the priceless pearl of divine love.

So to the One who reigns supreme as Love in the kingdom of heaven be all honour and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Stephen C. Barton

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Nick Rutter, John and Sonia Doidge, Jeyan Anketell.

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Anthony Staples aged 6, Audrey Egleston, Colin Eastwood, Yvonne Harper, Ian and Judith Watson, Alison Cox-Toplis, Julian & Wendy, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Robert Harris, Bill Hill, James Knight, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Renee Wellings, Felicity Woodfield

Those who have died

Reg Kirk,

ST JOHN

Those who are ill and their carers:

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Post Communion

Lord God, whose Son is the true vine and the source of life, ever giving himself that the world may live: may we so receive within ourselves the power of his death and passion that, in his saving cup, we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

CHURCH NOTICES

WORSHIP NEWS

SUNDAY WORSHIP IN CHURCH – PLEASE REMEMBER TO...

- Sanitise your hands on the way in – sanitisers are available
- Keep a proper distance at all times
- Sit only in seats as indicated
- Leave the church as instructed by the clergy and do not stay in church for conversation
- Conversation may continue in the open space of the churchyard
- Take with you the Sunday service sheet when you go
- You may wear a mask if you wish, but it is not required
- Be aware of others at all times
- Children are welcome but there will be no toys or activities provided

WORSHIP BY ZOOM will be on the first and third Sundays of each month. The next service is on. **Sunday 2nd August 6.00pm.**

You can join the service from 5.45pm. The service will last about 40mins.

If you have not had a link by Friday at 11am please contact the office office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk

CHURCHES OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER

St Michael's Lichfield is open between 2.00pm and 4.00pm daily until the end of July. From August 1st St Michael's will be open on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon's only. The church will be staffed during opening hours.

St John's at Wall is open on Wednesdays and Sundays from 10.00am to 4.00pm. The church will not be staffed during opening hours.

In both churches there is provision for hand sanitization, cleaning and social distancing. We are delighted to be able to open our churches, but we also want to make sure that everyone is safe.

OFFICE

Angie is now back in the office every morning. The church and office will still be closed to visitors on a Thursday. If you need to visit the office please use hand sanitiser as you enter the building and be aware of social distancing, especially in the vestry. Many thanks.

OTHER NOTICES

FLOWERS AT ST MICHAEL'S Now that we're back in church, if you would like to do the flowers, please sign the rota at the back of church. Flowers will be provided. *Diana*

BIBLE STUDY - WEDNESDAY 29th JULY at 10.30am We will be looking at and discussing the book of **Daniel** - which contains some well-known stories we all remember from Sunday school! The sessions will include an introduction and discussion. The text for the week and the questions we will be talking over will be posted on the website the weekend before each session. Anyone is welcome to come along and join in or simply listen and take in what is going on. [If you would like to join in please contact Angie in the office.](#)

LICHFIELD FOODBANK In the quarter April 10 June 2020 St Michael's donated the equivalent of 848 meals. Thank you for supporting the Foodbank and please continue to give generously

ENGLAND'S SAINTLY LANDSCAPE

Trevor James has recently published his book "England's Saintly Landscape" and has made 20 copies available to St Michael's for sale, at £10, proceeds go into Church funds. To buy a copy of Trevor's excellent book please 'phone Lyn Shiel (01543/320437) for details.

CHURCHES TOGETHER

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITY to host over the phone (probably one to one or very small groups) or over FaceTime (small group) sing-alongs for older people. for *Live at Home Scheme* <https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/churches-together.html> for more details

ST MICHAEL'S STUDY WEEK LECTURE SERIES

The Church of England: Where have we come from and where are we going? We are pleased to announce that from 17th – 21st August we will be holding an online lecture series. On each day a speaker will present a paper for discussion which will focus on past, present and future trends on a particular topic.

Each session will begin at **2.30pm**. Papers will last approximately 30-40 minutes, followed by discussion.

If you would like to register for one or all of the sessions, please email Rev Dr Melanie Clark at revdr.melclark@gmail.com, stating which sessions you would like to attend. We hope to see you there.

Please see our website for further details: <https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/study-week.html>

Monday 17th August: Biblical Interpretation

Revd Dr Stephen Barton: Landmarks in the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians

Tuesday 18th August: Education (School Focus)

Mary Hawes & Murray Wilkinson: Called, Committed and Connected – a canter through 200+ years of serving church, school and community.

Weds 19th August: Inter Faith Relations

Bishop of Lichfield, Michael Ipgrave: Where we have come from, and where we are going: the church's relations with other faiths.

Thursday 20th August: Social Justice

Rev Canon Dr Ellen Loudon - Social Justice and Activism

Friday 21st August: Liturgy

Rev Dr Sarah Brush: - ways forward in liturgy in our current uncertain climate

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 26th July

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St John
11:30am	Private Prayer	St John

Monday 27th July

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Tuesday 28th July

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Wednesday 29th July

All day	Private Prayer	St John
8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
10.30am	Bible Study	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Thursday 30th July

OFFICE CLOSED

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Friday 31st July

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Saturday 1st August

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
2:00pm	Private Prayer	St Michael's

Sunday 2nd August

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St John
11:30am	Private Prayer	St John
6:00pm	Evening Worship	Zoom