



Worship resources Trinity 6

Obedience is not a popular word these days. It can feel rather authoritarian, conservative and legalistic. But, the readings this week invite us to explore this word in a different way. As a creative and loving response to God's love and grace. And that is what God's Kingdom is all about.

May our worship lead us deeper into God's love this week, and lead us out into lives that embrace God's ways.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Genesis 29 : 15-28

Our weekly readings have reminded us that Abraham and his family were immigrants, who sent back to their homeland to find wives for their sons. Jacob has met his beautiful cousin Rachel, but her father Laban manages to get his elder daughter married first, according to the custom.

Psalms - 105:1 – 11,45b or Psalm 128

Romans 8 : 26-39

Paul moves from the ethical teaching we have heard in recent weeks, to rejoice that we who can call God 'Abba', Father, want to talk to him, and his Spirit enables us to pray. We are one vast family of Christian brothers and sisters, and nothing - no created thing whatsoever - can separate this family from God's love in Jesus.

Matthew 13 : 31-33, 44-52

Most of Jesus's teaching about the kingdom of heaven came in parables. Not everyone could instantly understand them, but they were cherished by the first Christians. Here, he gives four sun illustrations to show the immense value and the vast size of his kingdom.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%2029:%2015-28%0Acw%20Psalm%20105:%201-11,%2045b%0A%2BOR%0Acw%20Psalm%20128%0ARomans%208:%2026-39%0AMatthew%2013:%2031-33,%2044-52

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O God,
who hast prepared for them that love thee
such good things as pass man's understanding;
Pour into our hearts such love toward thee,
that we, loving thee above all things,
may obtain thy promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
Pour into our hearts such love toward you
that we, loving you above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Seeking wisdom we now present our petitions to God, saying, "Hear us good Lord," and responding, "Lord hear us."

For the followers of Christ, that they might take seriously their call to spread the
gospel by embracing the suffering of others.
Hear us good Lord.

Lord hear us.

For all who search for wisdom, including: biologists, philosophers, artists and

politicians, that they might have eyes to see.

Hear us good Lord.

Lord hear us.

For fathers and mothers and those called upon to raise children who are not their

own, that they might be filled with compassion and patient good humour.

Hear us good Lord.

Lord hear us.

For _____, our rector, that s(he) might continue to serve our people with vision.

Hear us good Lord.

Lord hear us.

For Sunday school teachers, that they might model their faith in lives of peace-making and caring service.

Hear us good Lord.

Lord hear us.

For those whose deaths we mourn, especially _____, that in this Eucharist we might share with them the feast that has no end.

Hear us good Lord.

Lord hear us.

God of Wisdom and Understanding, you hear our prayers and gently respond to

our concerns. Help us to trust in your grace and help us to share that grace with

others. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

God of our pilgrimage,

you have led us to the living water.

Refresh and sustain us

as we go forward on our journey,

in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O sovereign God,
in Jesus Christ you set your holy reign upon this earth
and within your people.
So let its coming be like the mustard seed
that grows into greatness,
and like the leaven
that mixes with the grain
until the whole becomes greater,
to the praise of the triune God,
who lives forevermore. Amen.

Seed-planting, fish-netting, break-baking, pearl-hunting God,
you shape us into living parables.
Pray with your Spirit in us
so that we may understand our experiences
as healing metaphors,
and become creative and abundant stewards
of the environment you entrusted to our love. Amen.

Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

To fulfill the ancient promise of salvation, O God,
you made a covenant with our ancestors
and pledged them descendants more numerous than the stars.
Grant that all people may share in the blessings of your covenant,
accomplished through the death and resurrection of your Son
and sealed by the gift of your Spirit. Amen.

Through dreams and visions, O God,
you broaden the horizon and hope of your people,
that they may discover the meaning of your covenant,
even in the midst of trial and exile.
Increase the number of those who believe in your word
so that all people may joyfully respond to your call

and share in your promises. Amen.

Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage. Amen

Lord God, Your Son left the riches of heaven and became poor for our sake:
when we prosper save us from pride, when we are needy save us from

despair, that we may trust in you alone; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Common Worship additional collects

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; 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

Most gracious God, you are mindful of us through all the years of our life. Pardon our sins and fashion in us those virtues which are acceptable to you. Grant that in serenity and we may serve you faithfully in the days to come, that our lives may be a reflection of your infinite love. Amen

God, you have poured the Spirit of your Son into our hearts so that we call you father. Give us grace to devote our freedom to your service that we and all creation may be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For the kingdom the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52:

Did you know that the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels?

Food holds such a critical place in the scriptures. Jesus talks about being spiritually fed lots of times. But he doesn't overlook the importance of alleviating literal hunger.

Some look at this as a literal miracle. Others read this passage as a miracle of sharing and abundance in a more figurative sense. I say: either way, it is a miracle indeed. People were hungry, then were fed. People were enabled to stay and hear Jesus preach.

Abundance - there was more than enough to go around. This is a great statement for today - we live in a world of abundance, but perceive ourselves to be in a world of scarcity. Jesus tries to show us our abundance. Can you see it? Live it? *By Beth Quick*

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

If we were tempted to think that being part of God's reign required nothing of us, we will be deeply challenged by this week's readings because the idea of "obedience" flows through all of them. Jacob's love for Rachel is a wonderful metaphor for how obedience works. He was willing to work long years in obedience to Laban because he loved Rachel so much that the years flew by like days. Solomon, as a new king, recognised how important it was that he led his people well, and in obedience to God, that he prayed for the wisdom to be a good king. In Psalm 105 God's gracious and mighty works on behalf of God's people are celebrated, with the clear understanding that this should result in loving obedience in return, and in Psalm 119 the psalmist, recognising the value of obedience to God's law, prays for mercy so that he can remain faithful in his obedience. Paul does not specifically mention obedience in the passage from Romans, but he does indicate that God's Spirit prays for us and works in us so that God's purposes can be fulfilled in our lives – which is what obedience is about – and again, God's initiative in loving us is shown to be the catalyst that leads us into lives of following and serving Christ. Finally, Jesus reveals what the Kingdom of God is like by telling stories of its subversive influence – the small things that have big influence – and the people who are willing to sacrifice greatly in order to attain it. Finally, he drives the point home when he indicates that not all will recognise or receive the kingdom, and these will ultimately miss out on the life it brings. Obedience, which is so often seen as religious legalism, or a dry and rigid compliance with the letter of the law, takes on a new vibrancy and attractiveness in the light of these readings. What the Lectionary is seeking to do here is to invite us into the kind of relationship with God where God's loving action in our lives is recognised and celebrated, and in which, because of our love, we seek to do what God would want of us, and to open ourselves to the life that God seeks to give us. Perhaps St. Augustine's words would be appropriate here: "Love God, and do what you like."

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: It's an interesting thought to try and connect the idea of obedience with what is going on in the world, especially since we have tended to think of obedience in individualistic terms. But, when we think of the context in which obedience is asked of us, and the impact our choices have on the world, we begin to see the connections far more strongly. Obedience does not refer just to not doing certain things that we would think of as 'sinful' – usually related to sexual behaviour, the use of certain substances and whether we give our assent to certain doctrines or ideas.

Rather, the world is created in such a way that certain things help it to grow, live and expand, while other things result in diminishing, death and contraction. Obedience, then, would be to co-operate with anything that gives life (what Matthew Fox refers to as “biophilia”) and to resist anything that would bring death (“necrophilia” in Fox’s scheme). It is when we recognise God’s presence, grace and love which seek to bring life, freedom and equity to our world, and when we experience a taste of this divine blessing for ourselves, that we find ourselves drawn to work with God and co-operate with God’s life-giving work. This is obedience in its most basic and most effective form. It is, first, the attitude of humility and openness that submits to God’s ways because they are what bring life. Then it is the act of giving ourselves to nurture life in whatever ways and in whatever places we can. For some this may mean getting involved in social, political or economic leadership and seeking to build systems that are increasingly just and liberating. For some it may mean doing the work of activism and standing publicly against injustice and oppression. For most communities of faith, though, it must mean seeking to embody God’s hidden kingdom, making the sacrifices to attain the treasure or buy the pearl of great price; trusting in the small daily kingdom acts that expand and grow into vast trees of grace and compassion; and reaching out in whatever ways we can as fishers of people to enable them to enjoy the benefits of God’s reign with us – teaching friends and companions the obedience that brings life not through argument, sermon or criticism, but through living Christ’s way and allowing them to see and experience the joy and life it brings through us. What small, sacrificial act of obedience might God be calling your community to make that has global impact and relevance this week?

LOCAL APPLICATION: In every life and community obedience takes the form of embracing Christ’s attitudes and actions in our daily interactions, our values, our ethics and our decisions. We obey God, and experience the hidden kingdom, when we resist the urge to take out our anger and frustrations (which are often directed at ourselves) on others. We obey God when we give of ourselves, our time and our resources to others sacrificially and joyfully. We obey God when we go out of our way to make others feel included, accepted, loved and served. We obey God when we refuse to do violence to, or ignore the rights of, other people. We obey God when we turn away from materialism and consumerism and live a simple lifestyle. We obey God when we spend prayerfully, and use what we have fully, wisely and with care and appreciation. We obey God when we refuse to enjoy benefits that others can’t or that are won on the back of others’ suffering. And, we obey God when we live in such a way that others are attracted to the Christ they

see in us. The essential call, then, is to live with wisdom (as Solomon requested), with integrity and faithfulness, with commitment (like Jacob) and with an awareness of the rhythms and movements of the kingdom which are at work around us all the time. Then, out of this mindfulness, we choose, moment by moment, to engage the world – and the people and creatures in it – from a Christlike framework. This means that obedience is not so much about ticking laws off a list. Rather, it is a Christlike, creative, moment-by-moment response to the people and situations we find ourselves in. It is searching for the movement and presence of God's love in each interaction, and then obeying the promptings that this gives us. It is opening ourselves to the ever-present love of God, and allowing that love to drive us into acts of love that point others to God, and that bring healing, restoration and hope to those who most need it. Obedience is surprising, unpredictable and transforming, if we will only embrace the adventure of it.

SERMON OUTLINE

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 another parable..

Jesus shares parables about *the kingdom of heaven....*

1. A Heavenly Truth 31-33: within 2 parables:-

a) *mustard seed* - becomes *the greatest of shrubs...*

b) *yeast* - *mixed in with 3 measures of flour* becomes a loaf

Jesus encourages his followers and uses these images to illustrate the growth of His Mission from small beginnings

2. A Hidden Treasure 44: *in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field* – prepared to sacrifice everything for it!

3. A Happy Transaction 45-49: - 2 more parables... **a) the Merchant:**

45Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls;

46on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. b) the Mariner: and his catch of fish - *47 'Again, the kingdom of*

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

4. A Holy Trust 51-52: Jesus encourages his hearers to discover the treasures & blessings God has in store for them and use them in the service of the Kingdom. *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.'* May we discover treasures old and new in His word! *By Norman Porteous*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Sermons that Work 1 - Finding value in what others overlook. Episcopal cleric on the parable of the mustard seed. "What we may not know today, but what the early listeners would have most likely understood, is that the mustard plant is a weed that grows like a bush and spreads. It's a very invasive weed. Jesus is comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to a plant that will constantly and inevitably keep growing and spreading. Have you ever seen ivy on an old house, taking it over completely? Now there's a visual. That's what the Kingdom of Heaven is like." Also includes good quote from CH Dodd.

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2014/?cat=8>

Sermons that Work 2

["Finding value in what others overlook,"](#) the Rev. Danae Ashley, *Sermons that Work*, Episcopal Digital Network

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2014/07/07/7-pentecost-proper-12-a-2014/>

Sermons that Work 3 - Relates the parable of the pearl of great price to prayer. An Episcopal bishop encouraged people to think of themselves as God's pearls of great price. "Are we really capable of believing and knowing that God loves us that much? Can we feel like Pearls of Great Value? It is central to the life of faith to accept and receive God's love – to know how much our God values us and everything that we do.

"This is why all these kingdom parables are so important to us. They each point to the hidden-ness of God's reign in our midst. They each suggest that the life of faith begins with something as small as a little bit of yeast or a single grain of mustard seed. And like the yeast, this faith of ours often remains hidden and unseen – unrecognised....

“The life of faith begins with accepting God’s love into our hearts, minds, and souls. Without that, we are nothing. With God’s love poured into our hearts we become Pearls of Great Value.”

http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/sermons_that_work_98975_ENG_HTML.htm

Day 1 - The problem with two spouses. Good exposition of the first reading. And an interesting take on using the two wives and relating it to marriage today. “Whether you are married or not is beside the point. This is actually a story about love, and the chances are good that either you have been in love or are in love or will be. So this is really a story about your relationships.

“Whoever it is that you love, that person is both Leah and Rachel. You may love one more than the other, but they are wrapped into the same person. Rachel is the one you love, and you’re sure that she will be the blessing to your life. But you can’t have Rachel without taking Leah, who you don’t love and you didn’t think you were getting. Not long after you are together, you discover you didn’t get just Rachel. You’re also very involved with Leah, and you can work for years trying to turn her into Rachel. Of course, this tension between the love you have and the love you want is as hard for women as it is men. For all we know, Leah could have preferred Esau like most everyone else, but her father stuck her with Jacob.

http://day1.org/1105-the_problem_with_two_spouses

America - John Donahue’s concise exposition of the three parables in the Gospel. Almost a paragraph per parable with the Evangelist Matthew making an Alfred Hitchcock style cameo role in the final verses of the chapter. Three good points also for prayer. Donahue is the master of conciseness but with no short cuts on scholarship.

http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2269

[*Ministry Matters*](#), July 27, 2014.

["God's Love,"](#) Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

CHILDREN

Worshipping with Children - Carolyn Brown’s excellent blog presents - Several possible children’s talks. The one based on the Gospel reading could also be used with adults! She writes: Parables don’t have just one right

answer or meaning. When we pay attention and think about them they often have many different things to tell us.

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2011/06/year-proper-12-17th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/06/year-proper-12-17th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Sermons4Kids - is on X marks the spot. We find our treasure at the cross. You need a map to hidden treasure that you can make yourself, and a wooden cross. The cross held at an angle becomes a cross. In the Bible and in life X marks the spot.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/x-marks-the-spot.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[Be Thou My Vision](#)

[Take My Life And Let It Be](#)

[Trust And Obey](#)

[O Loving Lord Who Art Forever Seeking](#)

[Priceless Vision](#)

[I Give You My Heart](#)

[Lord, Reign In Me](#)

[May The Words Of My Mouth](#)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title