

# TOGETHER

*only physically apart*

Elston | North Muskham | Southwell | Sutton on Trent

## Bring out of your treasure - new and old!

Further reflections on re-imagined church - from Matthew 13:51-53, NRSV

**S**lipped in at the end of these parables, near the end of Matthew 13 is a really curious passage (verses 51-53):

*"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." (Matthew 13:52 NRSV)*

What a puzzling verse! For Matthew, it's clearly the end of this discourse (Matthew caps this off by telling us that the next thing Jesus does is leave that place) and we end our parables this week, but what are we to make of this final instruction?

What are our treasure - new and old? Perhaps this takes particular significance at a time when some of our earthly, church treasures are prohibited - our buildings, our hymnody, even the Lord's Supper; and also a time when we consider what new treasures the kingdom of heaven brings - the new wine. I take heart, and so should the traditionalists amongst us, that there are old treasure that are still to be brought out in the kingdom of heaven. 'God values the old and the new treasure'! So should we. It's possible, as commentators have speculated, that the old treasures Jesus refers to are the understanding of God brought through the prophets and writings of what we now call the Old Testament (let's not forget that Matthew is a Jewish writer, writing for a Jewish audience - perhaps this is a message especially for the Jews) The new are the New Testament revelations of Jesus and the ushering in of his kingdom in new ways with his life, death and resurrection.

What might they be for us? In the re-imagined church discussions that we have been having, we have been trying to holding in tension this very question. There have been significant voices in this discussion talking about their fear that we will try to go back to how church was and a plea that we resist this temptation. However, at the same time, there have been significant voices calling for us to retain our Methodist distinctiveness and identity (perhaps for some it is more about retaining who we are as Christians and conserving the core message). We have a rich heritage in Methodist, a radical and prophetic ministry amongst the poor, the needy, those on the margins of society (much like Jesus' time spent with the outcasts). Perhaps this is our DNA, our old treasure. We also have a rich theology which is well documented in our hymnody and there is certainly a place for this! But equally we must see what God is doing in these times, the new wine, and ensure that these treasures are also brought to the fore. Perhaps paradoxically, church is becoming for many, closer. Many of us are engaging in a different kind of face to face - mostly online - which has encapsulating something of the community togetherness that society has rediscovered against the grain of social isolation. Many of us have also needed to rely on God more than ever during this time and in that sense church (rather the kingdom of heaven) has been closer at hand.

The overriding message here is that the kingdom of heaven integrates both 'old' and 'new'. The new is not to replace the old and nor is the old to hold back the new. This is our unique challenge. We must try our best to make this journey together - to listen to each other and make this balancing act. If we lose too much of the old we may cease to be who we are and if we hold back too much of the new, we may cease to be. We must be brave but perhaps also be gracious. As we navigate this, let's remember that we are sisters and brothers in Christ who have each other's best interests at heart. Let's be of one heart, if not always of one mind.



## Worship Opportunities

### 1. Online Services

A variety of worship opportunities are being hosted on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>) Tune in today!

### 2. Radio Services

**BBC Radio 4** (Also [online](#).)

08:10am **The inspiration of listening.** Exploring the inspiration of listening with writer Anna Magnusson and poet Pádraig Ó Tuama.

During this strange summer Pádraig and Anna find solace in time spent listening deeply.

### 3. Radio Nottingham

Every Sunday, at 8am, you can listen to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. Listen online to BBC Nottingham radio station 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.

### 4. The Gathering

If you would like to 'meet' face to face with folk on a Sunday morning, then you may be interested in the 'The Gathering' which is a Zoom based church made up of members from Southwell Methodist Church and led by one of our Local Preachers. The sessions begin socially from 9:45am and usually last an hour with a mixture of fellowship, bible focus, discussion and prayer for one another. There is also a chance to sing together!

If you are interested in joining The Gathering then do please get in touch with me and I can help you get connected.

*If all this this baffles you - call me or email: [peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk](mailto:peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk).*

## What's in our nets?

Reflections from Matthew 13:47-50 (NRSV)

What's your experience of fishing? My only real fishing expeditions were when I was in Fitzgerald, Georgia - in the USA. In the deep South the catfish is common and many of the folk in the church in Fitzgerald, where my father took part in a ministerial exchange, had what they called 'ponds'. In actual fact 'pond' was an understatement - these were lakes, normally with some kind of fishing cabin. The owners would stock these ponds with fish and go out onto them in a small tin boat to fish. I remember catching my first catfish and feeling very pleased with myself - if my mum were to read this, she'd be able to provide the photo!

I get the impression that this is not the kind of fishing that Jesus describes - indeed no lines are used in any of the New Testament examples of fishing that I know of! These involved widely cast nets that caught all and sundry and later they were sorted.

Before I make the point I'd like us to consider this week, I'm inclined to look back to two parables we've already encountered in order to understand what this is saying.

Firstly, there's the parable of the sower. He sows widely and generously not worrying about where the seed will fall, it is better to cast the seed on hostile ground than sow narrowly and risk missing some of the fertile ground. Here the net is cast wide; it is thrown. So wide is it cast that it becomes full. There is no concern, it seems for the fact that it will catch what will not end up as someone's supper, just that by casting the net many fish will be caught. I think we should be further encouraged to throw the net wide with our invitations to church. When we went deeper into the parable of the sower, we looked at invitation to church and reflected on how we are called not to get people to church but simply to invite them - success for us is to invite someone, God takes responsibility for the answer. I believe that we are the net and God will use us to bring in a bountiful catch! We need not be either competent at inviting or confident in our invitation but courageous and get on with it!

Secondly, we have a parallel with the parable of the weeds. It's another of the uncomfortable passages and, like the weeds, the reference to judgement is inescapable. It's cautionary - the angels are coming and though for some it will be wonderful, for others it won't. What is plain here is that we are no more called to start separating fish than we are called to start uprooting weeds. We are often quick to judge and yet God is not quick to judge - the Bible says that, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love." (Psalm 145:8) That doesn't mean that God will not judge but it shows that the focus should not be judgement - kind of 'be warned but know that God loves you!'

We may get bent out of shape about judgement and perhaps about evangelistic strategy but what we should really take from this parable is to get right with God and reach out generously to bring others into a right place with God.

This may be the end of the series on Parables and so I'd like to look back and take something more from the series. All of these parables have the Kingdom of Heaven in common - they all give us glimpses of the kingdom of heaven. In themselves they are not enough but together they paint a wider picture. You may have heard the story of the blind folk who encounter something in the jungle. The first describes encountering a snake as she feels it's long, slippery skin. The second describes encountering a tall tree as he feels its wide gnarly trunk. The third describes encountering a palm leaf as she talks of the thin, flat expanse. The fourth describes a rope as he feels the long, thin twine. Of course they are all encountering an elephant, each from a different feature. So too we've learnt a great deal about the rule and reign of God in our study of the parables.

We've been told a great deal about the Kingdom of Heaven (the rule and reign of God) over the last few weeks. We've learned that it will come more fruitfully in some places than others, indeed it will begin small and amongst weeds, but it will spread and reach every area before rising to make room for a great many; and eventually there will be harvest - a great catch!

But all of these parables have something else in common. Have you spotted it? They all involve human activity. There are a range of people: three farmers, a baker, a merchant and a fisherman. They are all hard at work, there's sowing (and plenty of it) kneading, seeking, buying and casting nets! What then is the final thing to learn about the coming of Kingdom of Heaven? It involves you. Here I am imagining God looking a bit like Uncle Sam - "Your Kingdom Needs You!" (Can you see the pointing finger? You should.)

As we re-imagine the church post lockdown, I wonder what part you are being called to play. There are many role (some frontline and other behind the scenes). Perhaps you're a sower. You could be sowing many seeds across a field or just planting a mustard seed (actually I personally think we should all be sowing somewhere in between these two - you shouldn't be afraid to share your faith or assume it's someone else's job - just find your preferred method). You could be someone who kneads the bread - that is facilitating the Kingdom of Heaven reaching places that it might not - people on the margins of society, victims of injustice, folk for whom church isn't naturally catering for - perhaps you're called to reform the church into a place where we better cater for folk on the fringes (beware though, kneading is hard work). You could be a merchant, one who knows how to turn our assets in something that can further the kingdom (our vast teams of resources managers come to mind!). We need folk who will ensure that our buildings are sacrificed to buy something infinitely more valuable - the Kingdom of Heaven. We also need treasurers who free up funds for mission. Of perhaps you're a net caster - whatever that equates to! (There will also be tool repairers or net stitchers, flour carriers, ground ploughers etc. if you'd rather not be in the limelight.) What I'm trying to say is, **the Kingdom of Heaven needs you, are you up for it?**

## Prayer Space

# Prayer



Join me, this Thursday, the 20th August in praying for our Nation. I'll be on FaceBook (Southwell Methodist Church FaceBook Page) praying from 20:20 (twenty past eight) for 20 minutes, for 2020. I'm there every month so feel free to join me, wherever you are, or simply spend 20 minutes in prayer at that time alongside many others across our nation.

*This month's focus is festivals, Bible weeks and summer missions which obviously are so much more difficult in the current climate.:*

Living Lord Jesus, thank you for the festivals, Bible weeks and summer missions run by Christians from different denominations. May we find every creative ways to reach out in mission during Covid-19. May the impact of us all working together in unity continue through churches in every community so that many people will put their trust in Jesus Christ (John 17:20).

*Please pray that the church will find ways of being present and visible when so much of what we are doing is online and invisible!*



FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church

Listen to a **prayer**: 0808 281 2514

Listen to **news**: 0808 281 2478

Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon

*If you have specific prayer requests, do get in touch with me and if you would like requests to be shared around the SMC prayer chain contact Colin Beckett [colin1244@gmail.com](mailto:colin1244@gmail.com).*

## Zoom Home Groups

Tuesday Zoom Groups are paused for a couple of weeks but if you'd like to be part of a midweek group, then do get in touch and I'll put you on my mailing list for when they start up again (we usually only break for a couple of weeks!)

**ALL WELCOME - from any church or none.**

**If you're interested in joining a study group.**



**Please get in touch.**

## Reflective songs...

And can it be (StF 345) [LINK](#)

Beyond these walls of worship (StF 547) [LINK](#)

As the deer pants for the water (StF 544) [LINK](#)

Blessed assurance (StF 548) [LINK](#)

Hear the call of the kingdom (StF 407) [LINK](#)

Click 'LINK's to access YouTube clips of each song.

## Help for the isolated

Elston residents, if you need support during the lockdown please contact the Good Neighbourhood Group through Sandra Wright on 07773 689736 or Linda Fitzgerald on 0798937115.

The Sutton-on-Trent Buddies Corona Virus Helpline is up and running - for help of any kind the number to ring is 01636 351615. or email [suttonbuddy@outlook.com](mailto:suttonbuddy@outlook.com)

Southwell Town Council can provide support by calling 07874780931, 07874780932 or 01636816103.

North Muskham's Buddy Scheme can be reached by contacting Andy Willey on 07967138724 or [muskhambuddyscheme@yahoo.com](mailto:muskhambuddyscheme@yahoo.com).

If you would like to volunteer you should also make contact using the above details.

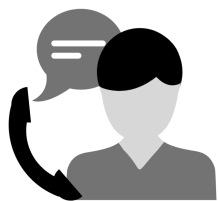
## Dial-a-sermon service now live!

### Dial a Sermon

To listen to this week's sermon from Revd. Peter Hibberts please call this number. (Calls cost the same as a local call.)

**01636 558871**

Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit  
helping you stay connected whilst we're apart.



We now have a telephone sermon service. If you have no access to the internet but would like to hear the reading and sermon from the previous Sunday, you can dial up the number above and hear it from the minister's voice! Calls cost the same as a local call and recordings should be around 15 minutes each - you can access them at any time of the day or night! We endeavour to upload the new sermon each weekend so it may be a few days behind this newsletter - don't worry, that's normal!

Do get in touch if you need to on (01636) 812166 or [peter.hibberts@methodistorg.uk](mailto:peter.hibberts@methodistorg.uk).

19-8-20

**Families:** by Katie Hibberts  
[families4SMC@gmail.com](mailto:families4SMC@gmail.com)

### CHILDREN'S CHURCH AT HOME!

We are providing a full children's church session for our younger church family members each week. You will be able to download the plan every week here:

<https://www.southwellmethodist.org.uk/childrenschurchathome.htm> so that you can do it at home as a family to help your children explore the theme that Rev. Peter preaches on in his service.



### FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

Discuss what message Jesus was giving when he told the parables we have looked at recently. Remind yourselves how Jesus used relevant images in his stories.

As a family, see if you can make up a modern parable using modern examples that would speak to people today (maybe suggest your children think of examples that would speak to people in their class at school).

You could write your parables as "real" stories or make them into cartoon strips (or even act them out!).

If you'd like to share your parables with us, we'd love to see them! Email them to me at [families4smc@gmail.com](mailto:families4smc@gmail.com) and, with your permission, we will share them on our facebook page and website!

### Memory verse:

"Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable"  
Matthew 13:34

Gather together some items from around the house...

- a toy microphone (a hairbrush will do) - representing 'speaking'
  - a cuddly toy - representing a 'thing'
  - a picture of lots of people - representing the crowd
  - a book - representing a parable (a story with a meaning)
- Spread these items around the room.

Read the memory verse aloud and ask the children to run to the appropriate item when it is mentioned:  
Jesus spoke (To the microphone) all these things (to the soft toy) to the crowd (to the picture) in parables (to the book); he did not say (to the microphone) anything (to the toy) to them without using a parable (to the book).

Repeat several times!!!

## Re-imagining Church - Prayer and Share

We have two more date for the Re-imagining church prayer and share and would love you to join us. These are informal prayer times and times to share as we seek God's will for the church post restrictions. Come and seek God with us...

In these unprecedented times we believe we're invited by God to be...



...let's join together in this important process with opportunities for...

**PRAYER** ...and to... **SHARE**

A series of 'gatherings' for prayer and to seek God's will for our changing church.

Prayer 'Gathering' 3: Sunday 6th September, 3-4pm - Zoom Meeting ID: 842 4011 0921 Password: Imagine

Share 'Gathering' 3: Sunday 13th September, 3-4pm - Zoom Meeting ID: 842 4011 0921 Password: Imagine

A recording of the first 'SHARE' session is available on request (for those who missed it).

Ministers: Rev Nathan Fella  
Rev Peter Bates and Rev Peter Hibberts  
[newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk](https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk)