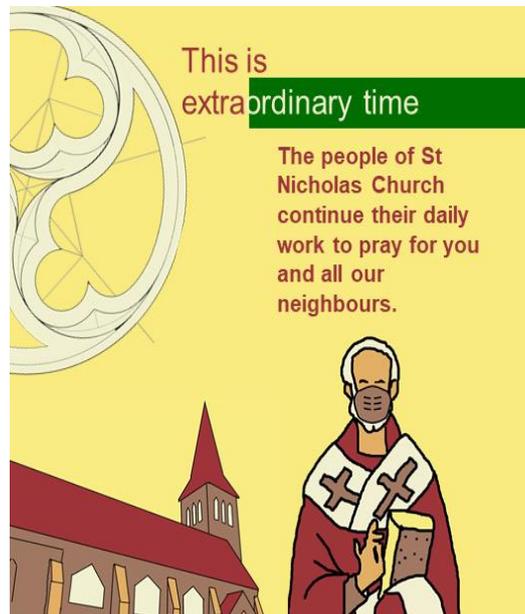


**Worship at St. Nicholas, Sutton  
for Trinity 7 on 26 July 2020  
Collect, hymns, readings, sermon & intercessions**



Please join me for our service at 10.30am today (or at another convenient time) by following the Order of Service and singing in your own home.

I will be thinking of you all and praying for you at The Rectory at the same time and longing for our future reunion in Church.

*Frances*

Revd Frances Arnold, Priest-in-Charge

Duty Warden: Geoff Rendall

Server: Diane Young

Musician: Pam Affleck

Sound desk: Jennifer Emptage

Old & New Testament: Julie Barbour

Gospel: Glynis Osborne

Sidespersons: Don Bonser, Rebecca Phillips      Refreshments: Marian Bonser, Sylvia Cowling

Welcomers: Julie Barbour, Mary Meldrum

**Collect** (prayer of the week)

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.**

## Hymns

Opening *Praise, my soul, the king of heaven*

Gradual *All people that on earth do dwell*

## Readings

### **1 Kings 3.5-12** *Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom*

<sup>5</sup>At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask what I should give you.' <sup>6</sup>And Solomon said, 'You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. <sup>7</sup>And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. <sup>8</sup>And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup>Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?'

<sup>10</sup>It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. <sup>11</sup>God said to him, 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, <sup>12</sup>I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.'

### **Romans 8.26-end** *Future Glory, God's Love in Christ Jesus*

<sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>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.\*

<sup>28</sup>We know that all things work together for good\* for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>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.\* <sup>30</sup>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? <sup>32</sup>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? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>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.\* <sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written,

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

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

<sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.

**Matthew 13.31-33, 44-52** *The Parable of the Mustard Seed & other parables*

31 He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; <sup>32</sup>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; <sup>46</sup>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; <sup>48</sup>when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. <sup>49</sup>So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous <sup>50</sup>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.' <sup>52</sup>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**

The sovereign and saving rule of God was long anticipated by the people of Israel and inspired psalms and prophecies. This new world would be brought into being by the Messiah; the coming king who would defeat neighbouring powers and through whom God would rescue Israel.

Jesus redefined these expectations around his own, very different, plans and vocation. He wanted to deepen understanding of what God's sovereign rule would be like and how it would come about.

He tells the parable of the mustard seed to try to convey what the kingdom of heaven is like, presenting two sharply contrasting images: the tiny seed and the great shrub. He intends us to consider both these images simultaneously: the small seed and the sizable shrub that comes from it. The kingdom of God is like the final stage: the tall shrub which provides shelter for the birds.

The mustard seed is not actually the smallest seed but it is much smaller than, for example, a grain of wheat and it was widely regarded as the smallest seed in common use in Jesus' time. It is all the more striking that, when grown, it is the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, large enough for the birds of the air to make nests in its shade. (We know that by the lake of Gennesaret this shrub can grow up to about 8 to 10 feet).

Faced with these strikingly different images, we might start thinking about the way in which the change has come about: the seed sprouting, then growing beneath the soil and producing the trunk; then the branches making their way gradually upwards and outwards. It is perhaps not surprising that a present-day reader of the Bible will start thinking about the process of growth. But thinking about the way the seed grows leads us in the wrong direction. The parable isn't about how the seed develops. The point is the contrast between the smallness of the seed and the size of what comes from it.

It is the contrast that would have caught the attention of Jesus' first century audience. It is the contrast between the tiny seed and the mighty shrub which show that a great change is going to come about, although they cannot yet see it. And in the same way, out of the most insignificant of beginnings, invisible to the human eye, God creates his mighty kingdom; a kingdom which embraces all the peoples of the world.

Jesus' audience would have recognized the allusion to a tree described by the prophet Ezekiel (17.22-end), which grows from a tiny sprig and 'becomes a noble cedar. Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind... I will bring low the high tree, I will make high the low tree.' Note that it shelters not only the birds, a familiar symbol of a

mighty kingdom which protects its subjects, but also 'winged creatures of every kind', which points forward to the Kingdom extending beyond the Jews to the Gentiles.

It is likely that when Jesus told the parable there was some doubt that his band of followers, which seemed so small, could help to bring in the Kingdom of God. Jesus tells the parable to help his audience understand that just as a mighty shrub will grow out of a minute grain of mustard-seed, so God's miraculous power will cause this small band to swell into the mighty host of the people of God. The example of the mustard seed warns that we should not judge the results by the size of the beginnings. **Amen**

(My thanks to Joachim Jeremias *The Parables of Jesus* for the main idea about the mustard seed)

### **Intercessions**

*prepared by Clive Orton*

May the Spirit pray through us, as we try to put into words the longing of our hearts for the church and for the world.

Father, we thank you for all who have helped us to pray and to grasp something of your great love and power. We ask you to bless and empower all who teach and minister in your name.

Lord of all creation:

#### **Teach us your ways.**

Father, we thank you for the beauty and diversity of the created world. We ask for the wisdom to tend it carefully and share its resources. May we listen to the poor and the weak as well as the affluent and the powerful.

Lord of all creation...

Father, we thank you for the joys of family and friendship. We pray for all with whom we share our daily lives, and especially for those we love but seldom meet.

Lord of all creation...

Father, we thank you for all in medical research; for the knowledge that they gain and for the hope that they bring us. We pray for all whose lives are diminished by illness, frailty and damage: give comfort and reassurance, healing, wholeness and peace.

Lord of all creation...

Father, we call to mind all those we have known and loved, and who have now died. We pray for too all who made that journey unnoticed and alone. We ask that they may all know your mercy, and the everlasting peace and joy of heaven.

Lord of all creation...

Father, we thank you for your wisdom and truth, your understanding and generosity.

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers,**

**For the sake of your Son,**

**Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*(based on this Sunday's prayers in Living Stones, year A)*