

## We are called to Worship

Welcome

### Announcements

The committee to wait behind after the service. If we wait in the church in the these front rows...

### Call to Worship

All too often when I talk to people about faith, especially considering faith in Jesus I am told I couldn't do that, I couldn't give up – it's too much of a sacrifice. This is the response of someone who has counted the cost of following Christ but hasn't understood the value of following of Jesus.

Psalms 19: 7-11 speaks to us about the value of following Christ when it says: ***The instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. The precepts of the Lord are right, making the heart glad; the command of the Lord is radiant, making the eyes light up. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are reliable and altogether righteous. They are more desirable than gold— than an abundance of pure gold; and sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb. In addition, your servant is warned by them, and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.***

Surely this is why Paul was able to say in his letter to the Philippians.

***But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ.*** (Philippians 3: 7-8)

Opening Praise

Holy, holy, holy  
All heaven declares

### Opening Prayer

Psalms 19:1-4 ***The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. Their message has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world.***

Glory of God, creation – what can we say in praise when we are confronted with such shouts of praise; from something that cannot even speak.

Despite the inadequacy of our words... still we are compelled, ***and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** Loose our tongues, enable us to speak out not only in praise, but in witness to the wonder of Christ. Psalm 45:1 ***my tongue is the pen of skilful writer...***

Just as we have been thinking of creation giving glory to God, so our being, the way in which God has created and known us speaks of his glory. ***I will praise you because I have been***

**remarkably and wondrously made.** (Psalm 139: 14) ***I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.***

(Jeremiah 1:5) Not just our birth, calling that gives you praise, but the way in which you stay with us through the whole of life – even to the end. ***I will be the same until your old age, and I will bear you up when you turn grey. I have made you, and I will carry you; I will bear you and rescue you.*** (Isaiah 46:4)

Pray for those affected by the abortion and assisted dying laws.

Thank God that these verse comfort those who question if they will see old age: Ukraine, Gaza, Iran, Israel, Somalia, Nigeria to name but a few places. May they know what it is for the Lord to bear them up.

Take time to acknowledge there are people at home who need to know that God bears them up. We have people approaching end of life – we pray for them, that they would know God through Jesus. Pray that the Holy Spirit would be at work in them drawing them to Jesus but also providing comfort for families.

Pray for the hardships in the community – homelessness continues to be a problem. Poverty in terms of finance, relationships, support, confidence, and of course poverty of faith.

Pray the Holy Spirit would ease this poverty.

Pray for a move of the spirit among lawmakers calling them back to God, in our society and in our church.

## We hear from God's Word

### Report from the General Assembly

Reading	Matthew 13: 44-46	Brian McMillan
<b>Praise</b>	<b>How deep the Father's love for us</b>	
Sermon	Treasure and Pearls	

I like nice cars, I like expensive cars, sports cars and supercars. I especially like Aston Martins; they tell me you can but a new Aston Martin for around £138000, they also tell me that the minute you drive that new Aston Martin out of the show room it drops in value by something in the region of £40000 – which means the new car you bought for £138000 is really only worth just under £100000.

It was Oscar Wilde who criticised the man who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing. I'm guessing if you can afford something like an Aston Martin it's not the price tag that matters but the prestige and, I would imagine, the enjoyment of owning a car like that. The value of the car far outstrips the price of it.

This is the meaning behind the two stories Jesus told about treasure found in a field and the man who finds a fine pearl.

In the first story we have a man working in a field – he isn't the owner of the field – while he works, he discovers hidden treasure. It seems it was common practice for people to store valuables by burying them in the ground. There were no banks, no security deposit boxes and a very great risk of your town, village or city being conquered, and your treasures taken as plunder. The safest thing to do then was to bury valuables in the ground.

It is unlikely in this story that the man who discovered the treasure was trying to rip off the owner. The owner would be unlikely to forget that his valuables were buried in the back field. What is more likely is that the owner had died and no-one knew he had buried his valuables.

Understanding the value of what he has just found the man keeps the treasure safely in the ground, and sold all he had to buy the field, and by default the treasure. Notice the key part of the story ***and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought the field***. Understanding the value of what he had found selling everything to gain possession of it was a joy.

The second story is incredibly similar to the first. The main difference being whereas the man stumbled onto the treasure in the field the merchant was actually looking for pearls. He was searching for something special, valuable, precious. This man seems to find many pearls, but they were ordinary; then he found one of great value. Like the man before him he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

Remember Jesus is telling these stories because he wants us to understand what the Kingdom of God is like. What we are being told here is that to discover or find the Kingdom of God is more valuable than any cost that may come with it.

What does that mean? Certainly, in the parable the cost is a very definite financial cost. In both cases the men in the stories sell everything they have to take possession of the treasure and the pearl. There is a very definite lesson that actually to let go of earthly treasures for heavenly treasures is, not so much a sacrifice, but a trade worth making.

We see this very clearly in the story of the rich young ruler. The young man comes to Jesus wanting to know how to inherit eternal life. Jesus talks to him about keeping the commandments and of course the first commandment is to have no other God before God. After listening to the man proudly declare he has kept them since childhood, Jesus tests this by asking him to sell everything and give it to the poor.

Of course, we know the story and how the young ruler was unable to let go of his wealth – he was able to count the cost but could not measure the value of what he was being offered.

It would be far too easy to boil this down to possessions – yes God does call some to give up what they have to live in service of him. People like Amy Carmichael who spent the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century working in India as a missionary, or Maud Kells who spent 30 years serving in the Congo and of course there are the missionaries we have been hearing about here in church, people like Csaba & Ilona Veres in the Hungarian Reformed Church.

If God is calling any of us to give up the comforts of home to serve him in this way, then that is wonderful, and we should not simply count the cost but understand the value of what we are being called to.

The reality is not everyone will be called in this way. There is a way in which every one-off is called and that also involves understanding the difference between the cost of the call and the value of the calling. We are all called to humble ourselves before God in confession and repentance, that we would be part of his kingdom.

I think the cost of this is actually much more than money, or lifestyle because it requires us to surrender our pride. All too often it is our pride that holds us back from being honest with God, completely truthful in our confession and following through with our repentance.

We worry about what others will think of us, what if our deepest darkest secrets are revealed, we are all too aware of the embarrassment and in many ways humiliation that comes with this level of real interaction with God through Jesus. It is easy to think the cost is prohibitive. The price to our reputation, our pride keeps us at arm's length.

Jesus is saying to us that actually the value of being part of the Kingdom through Jesus far outweighs the cost. Remember the joy with which the man who found the treasure sold everything – he understood that what he had found was of far greater value, so much so it was a joy, it was a good thing, it was worth celebrating selling all that he had.

The man who ended up with the fine pearl, he had been looking for something of value, he was searching, he rejected other examples, because when he saw the real thing – he got it, he understood and so he gave everything he had to own it.

Folks, have we seen the Kingdom. Can we grasp what is being offered. This is so much more than forgiveness, it is so much more than peace (although it is both those things). What we are being offered in God through Jesus is everything; everything that we long for; it is completion, the final end to that yearning for the very thing we can't really put our fingers on. What we are being offered is the very thing we were created for.

I will never own an Aston Martin, the cost is far too great and in truth the value of owning one doesn't justify the cost, certainly in my circumstances. However, I freely stand before you this morning and say I have sinned in some incredible ways, I have dishonoured God in some terrible ways and I am certainly not worthy of standing in this pulpit, never mind the Kingdom of God. But this I know for sure, the cost of being honest about who I am with you, and God is nothing to the value of being part of his Kingdom.

So, what will we do, who will we be like – the rich young ruler couldn't see past the cost, he couldn't see the value and as he walked away from Jesus, we never heard from him again. Or will we be like the Apostle Paul who famously said this: ***But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ.*** (Philippians 3: 7-8)

If today we are being called to Christ, if today we are being faced with the choice between the cost of humbling ourselves before God and the value of coming into his kingdom, then let's be clear – whatever the cost, pride, reputation, gossip, it is dung in comparison to the value of gaining Christ. Let's not be people who know the cost of everything and the value of nothing, let's be people who refuse to count the cost in order to be found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## We respond to God's word

Praise

All I once held dear

### Family Reading

1 Kings 17: 8-16

So he got up and went to Zarephath. As he came to the entrance of the village he met a woman, a widow, gathering firewood. He asked her, "Please, would you bring me a little water in a jug? I need a drink." As she went to get it, he called out, "And while you're at it, would you bring me something to eat?"

<sup>12</sup>She said, “I swear, as surely as your God lives, I don’t have so much as a biscuit. I have a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a bottle; you found me scratching together just enough firewood to make a last meal for my son and me. After we eat it, we’ll die.”

<sup>13-14</sup>Elijah said to her, “Don’t worry about a thing. Go ahead and do what you’ve said. But first make a small biscuit for me and bring it back here. Then go ahead and make a meal from what’s left for you and your son. This is the word of the God of Israel: ‘The jar of flour will not run out and the bottle of oil will not become empty before God sends rain on the land and ends this drought.’”

<sup>15-16</sup>And she went right off and did it, did just as Elijah asked. And it turned out as he said—daily food for her and her family. The jar of meal didn’t run out and the bottle of oil didn’t become empty: God’s promise fulfilled to the letter, exactly as Elijah had delivered it!

### Family Talk

What do you think you would have done if you had of been that widow and Elijah asked you to share your last bit of flour and oil. I think I might have counted what I had and said that I couldn’t share it.

That’s what we sometimes do – we count things and decide if we have enough to share, we count how much doing something will cost us and we decide if we can really do that thing.

Jesus tells us that we have to do more than just count the cost – we have to know the value of what we are getting.

Elijah knew if the widow would forget about the cost of helping him that God would do something wonderful with her and for her. The flour and oil didn’t run out. He didn’t fill the jars up; he just made sure that what she had was always enough to make the next bit of bread.

If we forget about the cost of following Jesus – if we don’t worry about being embarrassed about talking about Jesus; if we don’t worry about what others say about us, then God can do wonderful things, some of those wonderful things might well be that other people start to love Jesus the way we do and so they tell others.

It can sometimes be costly, we can sometimes wonder if we can do it – but if remember how much more God is, how greater he is – then wonderful things can happen.

### Family Praise      God is so Good

Prayers (Lord’s Prayer)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; they will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day 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.

### We are Sent Out to Serve in God’s World

Praise      And can it be

#### Charge to the People

Isaiah 65: 1-2

“I was sought by those who did not ask; I was found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that did not call on my name. I spread out my hands all day long to a rebellious people who walk in the path that is not good, following their own thoughts. Isaiah 65:1-2

## **Benediction**