



For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the daughters and sons of God..... For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as daughters and sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8:18-25

O God, you have been with your people in times long past. Now you are with us, the people of this generation and time.

And you will be with the people of generations yet to come.

So you continue to provide your promise of hope and certainty amid the shifting forces that challenge the whole of creation.

When your kingdom is finally realised in all its fulness it will be because even the smallest deeds and actions in your name have made an impact beyond our imagining.

And it will be because people of faith know and recognise the most valuable source and search it out, committing wholly to you, O God, and realising the firstfruits of the Spirit; taking the seeds of love and growing them into spreading trees of compassion, holding out branches of gentleness to all humankind and the whole of creation.

Holy guardian of all time, rewarding the searcher with your truth; offered as a jewel of infinite value in human hands that we may dare to believe that God is truly with us:

We turn to worship you and offer you our praise this day as our hearts reach out to you in hope and faith. Be found in our lives now; embrace us and carry us beyond our spectacular assumptions and our wishful thinking into the quiet of wisdom and hope and trust; and the recognition of your hidden gifts to us. Come to us now, Jesus Christ, come.

Amen

Hymn 47

*Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting you are God
to endless years the same.*

*Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all of us away;
we fly forgotten as a dream
dies at the opening day.*

*Our God, our help in ages past
our hope for years to come,
remain our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home.*

Confession and Assurance

Compassionate God, we bring you our confessions, trusting in your grace that never fails us, that is always to be found if we will dare to be honest with you and hold our lives open to your love.

When your kingdom comes on earth it will be because we recognise your loving influence, O God, and the darkness that seeks to overcome it.

Each one of us has the opportunity to bring closer your reign on earth as in heaven. If we refuse to receive the small things from you because we are waiting for something grander, if we turn away from the subtle touch of love because we demand that all our needs be met:

forgive such lack of faith, O God: when your kingdom comes on earth it will be because we recognise your loving influence, and the darkness that seeks to overcome it.

When we hold back acts of kindness because we cannot imagine them being enough or feel that they will never bring in a just world:

forgive such lack of faith, O God: when your kingdom comes on earth it will be because we recognise your loving influence, and the darkness that seeks to overcome it.

If we have become cynical and unfeeling, participating in the lowering of hope by looking at the world with eyes that fail to see the quiet workings out of patient hope:

forgive such lack of faith, O God: when your kingdom comes on earth it will be because we recognise your loving influence, and the darkness that seeks to overcome it.

The word to us in Jesus is that we are never left alone for nothing can separate us from the all-embracing love of God made known to us in Jesus the Christ among us.

Thanks be to God

Yes, O God, we are thankful that you celebrate small things in us and in all creation, the fragile plantings of love offered by people who never imagine that they are part of your larger plan even in the ordinary and sometimes destructive and depressing moments of their lives.

We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as daughters and sons. For in this hope we[are] saved.

Thanks be to you, O God, for all your goodness for us. When your kingdom comes on earth it will be because we recognise your loving influence, O God, and the darkness that seeks to overcome it.

Hymn 16

*The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink?*

*Do not be afraid, I am with you;
I have called you by your name,
you are mine;
I have called you by your name,
you are mine.*

*There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
for this I long:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life.*

*Do not be afraid, I am with you;
I have called you by your name,
you are mine;
I have called you by your name,
you are mine.*

*I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart,
hope in the Lord.*

*Do not be afraid, I am with you;
I have called you by your name,
you are mine;
I have called you by your name,
you are mine.*

Scripture Romans 8:26-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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 among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

**"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."**

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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.

In this is the word of the Lord.

Gospel Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

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

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Reflection

As we live in the crisis of this frightening pandemic, perhaps we are tempted to feel as if the end of the world is upon us. Then, when we read the passage from Romans, we can very easily see what Paul has to say in apocalyptic terms. But when we turn to the parables of the kingdom and the matter of the reign of God we are surely reassured. Over and over Jesus uses the simplicity and homeliness of these parables to point his hearers – in their day and in ours – to the reign of God as the initiation of a time of goodness and love arising from small and unpretentious acts within the bounds of everyday human experience and possibilities. It is about the frail sowing of justice as small as a mustard seed which begins as the tiniest of seeds yet grows into a great sheltering tree where nesting can take place for a multitude of the birds of the air. It is about the almost unnoticed and subtle leavening of life with kindness and grace. The reign of God is to be searched for until we find it entering into our everyday experience through myriad human acts of commitment and faithfulness in the most ordinary of ways, not something descending on our heads in triumph of apocalyptic dimensions and grandeur. But its worth will be a treasure beyond all other treasure; **the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.** (Matthew 13:45-6)

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome he was assuring them that the hope and expectation for the future that was the outcome of the action of the Spirit among them would transcend all their limitations and inadequacies as part of the created order that is our lot as humans. **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."** .(Romans 8:28)

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31) “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us “.(Romans 8:37) We in our time and place, challenged as we are, need to take these words to heart in our day because they are words for us, too.

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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.”(Romans 8:37-9)
In this is the word of the Lord for us.

Prayers for Ourselves and Others and Lord’s Prayer

The love of God as we know it in Jesus the Christ is an unsurpassed power for good.

The reign of God is always worth working for.

For the kingdom will come, but only if we sow the good seed; the kingdom will come, but only if we stop the evil that would stifle it;

the kingdom will come, but only when we recognise its worth and seek to bring it closer;

the kingdom will come, but only when we, the faithful, take ownership of its potential in our living and being.

Come, Lord Jesus, visit us as we pray. Take the small hope which lies hidden here and bring it into your light. Inspire in us the deep desire to go beyond where we have been before, to walk your path of truth and share your life of compassion and grace. Take all that we are, even our most humble gifts and nurture us into a transforming hope for the world.

Walk with us and lead us towards the treasure which is your life and being in us and around us, resurrection life.

This we pray with the words you yourself taught ...

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.***

Amen.

Hymn 569

*Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land:
I am weak but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.*

*Open now the crystal fountain
whence the living waters flow:
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer
be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.*

*When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee*

Go into this next week and see the wonder of God in small moments.
Go in peace because the Christ is with us.

Benediction

The jewel of abundant life waits for us in the embrace of God,
the pearl of kingdom living is to be found in the commitment of Christ to the faithful
and the Holy Spirit will keep safe all that we bring in faithful living.

Thanks be to God. Amen

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