

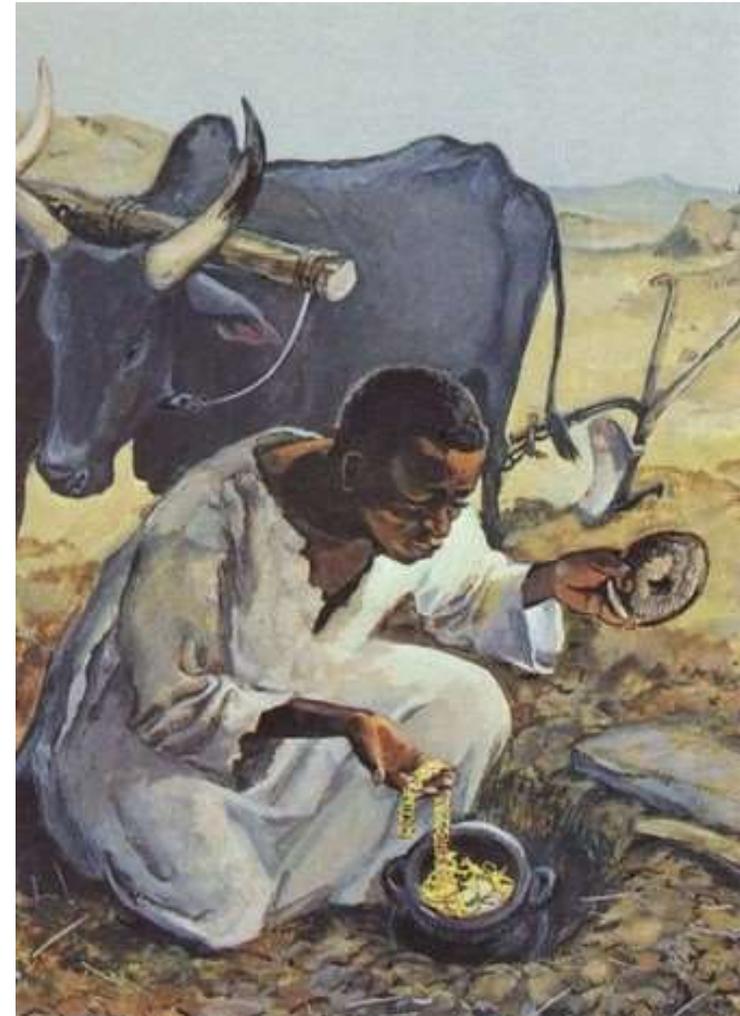
## Preparation:

The readings set for this Sunday include:

- **Genesis 29:15-28**
- **Psalm 128**
- **Romans 8:26-39**
- **Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52**

1. You may want to read some or all of these readings before starting your worship – or include them after the first prayer.
2. When preparing for this worship, find a place and time where you can be quiet and comfortable for half an hour.
3. Put something that speaks to you of God’s faithful love in a place where you can focus on it.
4. You can sing the hymns if you are able, or you can read the words out loud – or silently if that seems better. Alternatively you may find them on the internet
5. When you are ready, light a candle/tea light if it helps you to focus. This may mean many things and perhaps speaks to you of the kingdom of heaven.
6. Now, sit down and relax...
7. Welcome to worship!

## Order for worship on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2020



JESUS MAFA. The Hidden Treasure, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-image/act-image-link.pl?RC=48286> [retrieved July 24, 2020]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>).

## **Worship for Sunday 26th July – at Central Hall**

*Notes for worship preparation are on the other side of this sheet.*

**Call to worship:** “Come, Lord, and open, in us, the gates of your Kingdom!”

**Hymn 479:** The king of love my shepherd is

**Prayer:** Christ our King and our Saviour, we worship you. You open our hearts to the signs of your kingdom. Guide our eyes, we pray, and open our hearts to see the beauty of your kingdom. Help us see the pearl of great price and the treasure in the field. And forgive us, Lord, if we have failed to see your kingdom in the world around us, in other people, or in your creation. If we have chosen to ignore what is most precious, in favour of cheap copies, forgive us and restore us, and show us, again, how to see your kingdom’s treasures in our lives and to prize them above all else.

**Reading:** Jesus said “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” *Matthew 13:45-6*

### **Reflection:**

We were moving house again and I was at the tip. We had emptied as much of the garage rubbish as we could into the back of our car. Now, as I threw things into the skip I felt, as I often do, a kind of nostalgia for things as they were, this moving to another house, to another community is not always easy. But, as Jesus says, it is sometimes necessary. Sometimes we need to find new places and new possibilities in life, and sometimes we need to stay where we are and do what needs to be done where we are, but in both cases we have to move on and not look back, as Lot’s wife did. Rather we have to be like the person Jesus talks of who is not looking back and therefore is able to plough a straight furrow. Letting go of all that could hold him back, the merchant sells all to gain a pearl. He must have loved pearls.

It seems that Jesus also thought pearls were something special. He talks about them here, but he says elsewhere that we shouldn’t cast pearls before swine. Perhaps it’s the iridescence of a pearl, its depths which seem to come from somewhere deep in the universe, yet are contained within a small hard ball which forms round a piece of grit in an oyster’s shell.

Is the clue to all these examples about the kingdom of heaven that they speak of an absoluteness of intention – the desire to give everything up for something more beautiful, more valuable?

It’s like past attractions are all now worthless when compared with the new discovery – all else fades away when held up against the kingdom of heaven. What is this kingdom of heaven like?

For us the closest we come to the kingdom may be when we turn our lives towards Jesus and allow ourselves to be transformed by his life, his love, seeking the kingdom, which is close at hand when he is close at hand. Here, then, is the pearl of great price – the beauty of Christ’s love for us and for all the children of the world.

Jesus is our example, and he himself, for love of us and the kingdom of heaven, was willing to die a painful death, like grit the heart of the human story, to reveal himself as the source of beauty and hope in our lives. This is worth us giving up so many things which we formerly wanted to hold onto.

Back to the tip, as I throw in an old computer which my son bought for his school work a decade or more since, I realise that his life and mine have moved on. The material things of our past are nothing compared to the kingdom of heaven, where the love of God is greater than all our persecutions, , trials, fears and doubt. The kingdom of heaven is where nothing indeed can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

**Hymn 566:** Take my life

**Prayers** This week we pray for those struggling to see any hope in their future, for those who have been bereaved by the coronavirus and by preventable diseases across the world. For all those who have glimpsed your kingdom and yet have failed to turn aside. Lord have mercy on them. And have mercy on us and those who we have a special care for. Especially at this time of the country beginning to open up again, we pray for all who are still taking enormous risks to ensure the safety of others, in the emergency services, education and health. Amen

### **Lord’s Prayer**

**Hymn 255:** The Kingdom of God

**Blessing:** May the blessing of God, our Father and creator, Jesus our Brother and our redeemer, and Holy Spirit, life and breath, be with us and those we love this day and evermore, **Amen**