

3rd August 2025 – Morning Service

Bigger and Better?

Megan Ashmore

Welcome and Call to Worship

Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart.

Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before your God, come.

Lord, we come to give you praise and thanks; to seek forgiveness and restoration; to revel in your love and care; to hear your word and receive your strength to share that word of life with others. And as we worship, we are assured of the presence of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

StF 548 – Blessèd Assurance

1) Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:

2) Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture burst on my sight;
Angels descending bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love:

*Ch) This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.*

3) Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest -
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love:

Frances Jane van Alstyne

Prayers of Adoration, Praise, and Thanks

Contributed by Amanda Evans – Worship Leader at Overend

Almighty God, at times we feel like the disciples when they were in the boat being tossed around by the powerful winds and fierce waves. But then we remember how the story ends, with your son Jesus speaking “peace” to the storm. The disciples were amazed, wondering what kind of man this was who could calm a raging storm.

We adore you because you are the only one powerful enough to quieten the storms in our lives. It is so easy to become overwhelmed when we are struck by difficult circumstances. But we are assured that we don’t have to fear anything as a child of God. All power belongs to you.

Thank you Lord for your mighty power at work in our lives right now - for your Holy Spirit who provides strength within us to do the things you’ve called us to do. Help us never to forget where that mighty power comes from. We lift our eyes to you, our wonderful, majestic and awesome God. Amen.

StF 473 – Moses I know you're the man

Chosen by Amanda Evans – Worship Leader at Overend

- 1) 'Moses, I know you're the man,' The Lord said.
'You're going to work out my plan,'
The Lord said.
'Lead all the Israelites out of slavery,
And I shall make them a wandering race
Called the People of God.'
- 2) 'Don't get too set in your ways,' The Lord said.
'Each step is only a phase,' The Lord said.
'I'll go before you and I shall be a sign
To guide my travelling, wandering race;
You're the People of God.'
- 3) 'No matter what you may do,' The Lord said,
'I shall be faithful and true,' The Lord said.
'My love will strengthen you as you go along,
For you're my travelling, wandering race,
You're the People of God.'
- 4) 'Look at the birds in the air,' The Lord said,
'They fly unhampered by care,' The Lord said.
'You will move easier if you're travelling light,
For you're a wandering, vagabond race,
You're the People of God.'
- 5) 'Foxes have places to go,' The Lord said,
'But I've no home here below,' The Lord said.
'So if you want to be with me all your days,
Keep up the moving and travelling on,
You're the People of God.'

Estelle White © 1969 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Introduction to the reading

In our gospel reading we are going to hear how Jesus was called upon to settle a dispute between two brothers about their inheritance. Rather than acting as arbitrator, he acted as advisor to them and all who were in the crowd that day. Ever aware of his purpose to bring people into a relationship with God, Jesus used the opportunity to teach about the place of material possessions in life. As was his custom he brought forth his message by way of a parable – a technique used by Jesus to illustrate a meaning through a story. In this case the futility of storing up treasures on earth in the parable of the Rich Fool.

Reading: Luke 12: 13-21 (New Living Translation)

Then someone called from the crowd, "Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me."

Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, "My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!"'

"But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

Reflection

I hear a lot of adverts on the radio as I drive to and from work each day. Adverts insisting their product is healthier; whiter; cheaper; brighter; kinder; longer; faster; stronger etc etc. All of them trying to convince us we need these products to make our lives better. Now in some cases it might be true - if laundry really can be done at a lower temperature and in a shorter time then perhaps that is better for the environment. But do we really need a phone with a camera that can distort the true picture? And the urge to have the latest gadgets and new fashions promotes rivalry, jealousy and upset.

Jesus referred to the man who had stored up earthly wealth as a fool.

What do you think of when you hear the word “fool”? Do you recall stories of medieval jesters whose job it was to entertain the royal court by being amusing? Do you think of modern-day clowns who enjoy chasing each other around a circus ring or teasing the crowd by threatening to throw buckets of water on them? Or do you recall April Fool’s Day and the opportunity to gently tease someone – who can forget the story about spaghetti growing on trees??

David, the psalmist wrote, “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.””

This is what Jesus was alluding to here in this well worked tale. The man had built up treasures on earth but had neglected to recognise his need of God. Imagine for a moment the interview between the man – Mr. McDonald – the farmer wanting planning permission to build bigger barns and the official from the planning office – let’s call her Deborah.

Deborah: Good morning Mr McDonald. I understand you are here today because you want to build a better barn.

Farmer: That’s right Miss. I have been blessed with a bumper crop and want a better barn to store it all in.

Deborah: And why will this barn be better Mr McDonald?

Farmer: It will be bigger. Much bigger.

Deborah: And a bigger barn is better because...

Farmer: Because it will hold all this crop and the next and the next and the next...

Deborah: What will be the legacy of this bigger, better barn Mr McDonald?

Farmer: It will serve me for the rest of my years Miss.

Deborah: And after the rest of your years – how will it serve you then?

Farmer: Ummmmmm...

William Barclay in his commentary on this passage from Luke’s gospel suggests two fundamental flaws with this man. Firstly he couldn’t see beyond himself, and secondly he couldn’t see beyond this world. The opening line of the parable indicates that the land was fertile and had produced a good harvest. Nothing is attributed to the man – he had been gifted this bumper crop. And yet, he accepted it as his reward, and his only. Not once did he consider God – he didn’t give thanks for such a blessing, nor did he turn to God for guidance as to what to do with it. He was self-consumed. And he was self-contained. The man had no apparent consideration of others nor of anything outside his self-created world.

But remember this was a cautionary tale narrated to the people. It didn’t have to be like this. In light of the request of the voice in the crowd Jesus wanted them to know the importance of holding material possessions lightly, in favour of knowing God wholeheartedly. And God was there amongst them – standing in front of them – talking with them. Yet some were blind – they could see only their own grievances and what they believed to be their right to living a happy life.

Let’s read this as a reminder for us today. A reminder that all the things we have are God’s; we are just looking after them for a time. We must remember to keep a light hold, not a tight hold, on the blessings of this world and be willing to give them back to God’s care when required; giving thanks for all that has been gifted to us, and seeking God’s will to use them for the work of the kingdom. And in so doing we build up our relationship with God which is the best treasure of all.

Ken Gire, an American author, has written a series of books about spending precious moments with Christ. One of them is called “Instructive Moments with the Saviour” in which Ken reflects on some of the parables of Jesus. The following is a prayer from that book which penetrates the core of this story of the rich fool.

Dear Teacher,

Teach me what life is all about.

Help me to learn that it does not consist of possessions, no matter how many, no matter how nice.

Help me to realise that the more things I selfishly accumulate, the more barns I will have to build to store them in. Help me to realise too, that the storage fee on such things is subtracted from a life that could be rich toward you instead.

Where have I enriched myself at the expense of my soul? Where have I been a fool? Show me, Lord. While there is still time to change.

Teach me that life is more than the things necessary to sustain it. Help me to learn that if life is more than food, surely it is more important than how the dining room looks; if it's more important than clothes, certainly it is more important than whether there's enough closet space to hold them.

Keep me from treasuring those things, Lord. I don't want my heart to be stored up in some cupboard or closet the way that rich man's heart was stored up in his barns. I want my heart to be with you, treasuring the things you treasure.

Show me what those things are, Lord.

Sweep my heart clean of every kind of greed....

Help me to realise that just as I brought nothing into this world, so I can take nothing out, and that the only riches I will have in heaven are those which have gone before me, the riches which I have placed in the hands of the poor for your safekeeping....

Let us pray:

Confession: (Based on a poem from "Surprised by Grace" by Susan Durber)

O God, who, in Jesus encouraged us to lose our selves, hear our prayer of confession:

For the times when we have been self-conscious, forgive us. Give us the ability to forget ourselves, that we would give attention to others.

For the times when we have been self-absorbed, forgive us. Give us the capacity to turn from ourselves, that we would become immersed in you and the work of your kingdom.

For the times when we have been self-critical, forgive us. Give us a spirit of mercy, that in being forgiving and merciful even to ourselves we would show that forgiveness and mercy to others.

For the times when we have been self-contained, forgive us. Give us a true knowledge of our dependence on others and a delight in being part of humankind.

For the treasures we have built up on earth at the expense of the joy of fully knowing you, forgive us. Give us a fresh understanding of what it means to set our treasure in heaven.

O God, grant that being saved from ourselves, we may be remade in Christ, who gave himself for us. Amen.

Song – You are my strength when I am weak

You are my strength when I am weak,	Jesus, Lamb of God,
You are the treasure that I seek,	Worthy is your name.
You are my all in all.	Jesus, Lamb of God,
Seeking you as a precious jewel,	Worthy is your name.
Lord, to give up I'd be a fool,	
You are my all in all.	

Dennis Jerigan © 1991 Shepherd's Heart Music/Sovereign Lifestyle Music

Reading: Psalm 23 and Luke 10: 11-18

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

I am the good shepherd.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.

They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Comment

How is it with your soul?

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, used to ask this question of his brothers and sisters in faith whenever they gathered together in a small group, their "class meeting." He thought that it was important that believers should engage in such deep conversations about how they were doing in their faith, about how their relationship was with God.

The German Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, *"Hey, you! Human being! You have a soul!" See that you don't lose it, that you don't wake up one day from the frenzy of life—professional and private life—and see that you have become hollow inside, a plaything of events, a leaf driven back and forth and blown away by the wind: that you are without a soul. Human being, pay attention to your soul!"*

So, how is it with your soul? What are you doing to look after your soul – that part of your body that connects you to God and which God alone can satisfy? I hope like Horatio Spafford, who penned the hymn, "When peace like a river attends my way" you are able to respond, "It is well, it is well with my soul." Spafford knew tragedy; he recognised that sin could get the better of us all; that temptation and sorrow were part of this earthly life. Yet he had hope and assurance - in Christ who shed his blood for us all; in Christ who gives us peace; in Christ who will return and take us to him.

"It's good to talk" was the slogan of BT many years ago. More recently it has been used by a mental health awareness campaign, that acknowledges the need to talk about how we feel. The rich fool didn't talk about his problem; he didn't seek advice; he didn't give any consideration to his future. Our future, the future of all the created world lies in the relationship we have with God our Father.

So let us take a moment to ponder:

What are the things that I'm engaging in that bring my soul closer God?

What are the things that I'm doing that are putting a wedge between God and myself?

What are the things that I'm doing in my life that really make my soul shine brightly and flourish?

What are the things that I'm engaged in that are draining the life out of my soul?

If your soul is troubled, lost, overwhelmed, thirsty, hungry, afraid, confused, pray that you may know that peace and grace of the good shepherd who comforts, leads, provides and protects; the good shepherd who knows you by name and loves you with an unfailing love; the good shepherd who will carry you home. If you are able to say, "It is well with my soul" rejoice, give thanks and look to share the good news of God's love with others.

However it may be, let us never be complacent about the health of our soul.

Let us pray:

Lord, "Whatever my lot, you have taught me to know, it is well, it is well, with my soul." Thank you for coming to earth to show us the way to live in a right relationship with you. Thank you for your teaching, your guidance and love. We pray that we may always listen to your voice and follow you, trusting in your goodness and grace. Amen.

StF 481 – The Lord's my shepherd

- 1) The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green,
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.
- 2) He guides my ways in righteousness,
And he anoints my head with oil;
And my cup - it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.
- Ch) *And I will trust in you alone,
And I will trust in you alone,
For your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*
- 3) And though I walk the darkest path -
I will not fear the evil one,
For you are with me, and your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend © 1996 Thankyou Music

Prayers of Intercession

Contributed by Patricia Sanger – Worship Leader at Overend

Let us pray together for our World,
God of peace and justice, we come before You with hearts heavy from the violence in our world. We lift to You those caught in the crossfire of war -civilians, soldiers, leaders and the most vulnerable.
For children living in fear, for families torn apart, for homes and cities reduced to rubble - we pray for comfort, healing, and protection.
For those in power - governments, militaries, and decision makers - grant wisdom and courage to seek diplomacy over destruction, justice over vengeance.
Forgive us, O God, when we grow indifferent to the suffering of others.
Renew in us a passion for Your justice and a hunger for reconciliation.
Empower Your Church to stand as a witness to the peace of Christ.
To be a voice for the voiceless, and a light in the darkest places.
Make us instruments of Your peace.
Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray Lord for your Church. Your word says that You are near to all who call on You in truth. We call on you to strengthen Your Church. Make us holy, strong and filled with peace. May we be one in heart and soul. May we devote ourselves to the teaching of Your Word, to fellowship with one another, to the sacrament of holy communion, and to prayer. May we love, serve and worship together, being filled with faithfulness and love.

May each of us share from our resources and special abilities to build each other up. We each have individual gifts and abilities and we ask that you help us to use the gifts you have given us. Let us step out with you in faith.

Grant us understanding to know what we need to do,
Grant us courage to go where we are needed,
Grant us strength to face our difficulties,
grant us determination to overcome our disappointments,
grant us wisdom to serve you well.

Lord Jesus, let us step out in faith, so that your light shines far beyond our way, bringing your truth to many.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who work in our communities to bring education, health care, emergency help and social care to those in need. We pray for all people who are in trouble and fear today. We pray especially for those known to us personally. We pray for those who are sad, anxious, lonely, tired, in financial need, unemployed, ill in hospital or at home and for those who care for them. Lord, surround all in need with your wisdom, your spirit, Your healing and your life-giving peace. Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of Your salvation.

Lord in Your Mercy, hear our prayer.

Finally, we pray for ourselves. As we go into the week ahead, we ask that we may walk more closely with you at our side, safe in the knowledge that Your love and care knows no bounds.
May we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy 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. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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.**

StF 489 – All I once held dear

1) All I once held dear, built my life upon,
All this world reveres, and wars to own,
All I once thought gain, I have counted loss;
Spent and worthless now, compared to this.

*Ch) Knowing you, Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness,
And I love you, Lord.*

Chosen by Patricia Sanger – Worship Leader at Overend

2) Now my heart's desire is to know You more,
To be found in You and known as Yours.
To possess by faith what I could not earn,
All surpassing gift of righteousness.

3) Oh to know the power of Your risen life,
And to know You in Your sufferings.
To become like You in Your death, my Lord
So with You to live and never die.

Graham Kendrick © 1993 Make Way Music

Offertory

Lord, we come before you in the spirit of sacrifice. We leave behind everything that gets in the way of our relationship with you and which prevents others seeing your glory. We offer all that we have and all that we are to you. Amen.

Blessing

May the love of the Lord rest upon your soul.
May his love dwell in you throughout every day.
May his countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May his Spirit be upon you as you leave this place. Amen (StF 771)