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ORDINARY 17A

26th July 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Take time to read this prayer:

God of all creation,
I worship you.

You know me: what I need, what I rejoice in, what I'm nervous about.

You see me: as the unique individual you created with all my little habits and characteristics.

You hear me: when I pray aloud or silently.

You meet me: here and now and I am content.

God of all creation,
I worship you.

Amen.

Wonder to yourself if you are really able to say the words. Imagine what it would be like to hear someone else say them for you.

Notice how you feel as you read them.

Take time to tell God what you've discovered.

Then when you are ready and if you feel able say them aloud:

God of all creation,
I worship you.

You know me: what I need, what I rejoice in, what I'm nervous about.

You see me: as the unique individual you created with all my little habits and characteristics.

You hear me: when I pray aloud or silently.

You meet me: here and now and I am content.

God of all creation,
I worship you.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

What a precious collection of parables we have as our gospel today! This section of Matthew's gospel feels like 'story time' with Jesus, as he offers not one image of the Kingdom of God, but several.

A tiny mustard seed.

A handful of yeast hidden in flour.

A treasure buried in a field.

A pearl of great value.

A fishing net gathering all kinds of fish.

It is as though Jesus is saying: the Kingdom is too big, too rich, too surprising to be captured by a single picture. It brings to mind the quote from John Berger: 'It is no longer possible to tell any story as if it was the only one.'

Perhaps that is one of the first lessons for discipleship: God's reign is often found where we least expect it, and if we think we've 'got it', we probably haven't...

The mustard seed is tiny, almost insignificant. Yet it grows into something large enough to provide shelter. The yeast is hidden and invisible, yet it transforms everything it touches. In a world that often celebrates what is big, powerful, and immediate, Jesus points instead to the small, the quiet, and the overlooked.

The Kingdom begins with a conversation, a kindness, a prayer, a protest for justice, a moment of forgiveness, a community meal, a decision to keep loving when it would be easier not to. These things can seem insignificant, but God delights in working through small beginnings.

Then Jesus tells of the treasure and the pearl. In both stories, someone discovers something so valuable that everything else is reordered around it. This is not about giving up joy; it is about discovering what truly matters.

Many of us spend our lives pursuing things that promise fulfilment: success, security, recognition, certainty. None of these are bad in themselves. But Jesus asks: What is your treasure? What is so life-giving, so beautiful, so true that you would gladly organise your life around it?

For Christians, the answer is not a doctrine or a rulebook. It is the experience of God's love and the invitation to participate in God's work of healing and reconciliation in the world.

Finally, there is the net that gathers fish of every kind. It is a striking image. The net is wide. It gathers diversity. It does not sort people before drawing them in. God's Kingdom is always broader than our assumptions. The grace of God reaches further than our categories and welcomes more people than we might expect.

So today, reflect on these questions:

- What small signs of God's Kingdom can you see around you?
- What treasure are you truly organising your life around?
- How might you become more open to the surprising, expansive work of God's grace?

The Kingdom of God rarely arrives with fanfare. More often it grows quietly, like a seed beneath the soil or yeast within dough, but it is growing. And when we glimpse its beauty, we discover that it is worth everything.

May you have eyes to recognise the treasure of God's presence, courage to nurture small seeds of hope, and faith to trust that even the smallest acts of love can help transform the world.

Hymn / Song:

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Go out, with the Spirit of God going ahead of you.

Go from this moment, knowing that there is a bigger story of love, which you can play a part in.

Go from this time, blessed, loved, inspired,
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 27th July

- God of courage, give me strength for this week.
- When I feel small, remind me that small acts of love matter.
- When I feel unsure, help me take the next faithful step. Amen.

Tuesday 28th July

- On this day, the Lutheran church has traditionally celebrated three of Germany's greatest Baroque composers: Bach, Schutz and Handel.
- Today, as an act of prayer, why not look up and listen to a piece of music by one or more of these incredible composers. As you listen, notice the emotions and responses in your body – pray about what comes up.

Wednesday 29th July

- God of my family,
Come into the places I call home, that I might show and discover something about you in my house, at my mealtime, in my bed.
- Show me how to love my friends and family, and reveal your nature of love to me, through my relationships with those closest to me. Amen.

Thursday 30th July

- Be still for 10 minutes today, or longer if you can manage it. Just allow the silence to wash over you and use the space to notice what thoughts come to mind.
- Pray about your internal monologue, offering it over to God.
- If it helps, repeat this simple mantra from the Psalms: Be still, and know that I am God.

Friday 31st July

- God of light, shine gently into the hidden places of my life.
- Where I need healing, bring healing.
- Where I need courage, bring courage.
- Where I need to change, bring grace. Amen.

Saturday 1st August

- Today is known as Emancipation Day, because in 1833 it is the day when the Slavery Abolition Act came into effect in many parts of the former British Empire.
- The Methodist Church in the UK is currently grappling with the concept of reparations and the work that is needed to address the pain caused and complicity in the trading of human beings during our history. You might like to pray for this process, take a look at the report to this year's Methodist Conference on the subject, and reflect on how this conversation impacts you, your church community and those who you know.
- <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/social-justice/reparative-justice/>