
Sunday 26 July 2020
SUNDAY WORSHIP
BUNYAN MEETING BEDFORD



Introit - God be in my head

Click to hear: [God be in my head](#)



God be in my head,
and in my understanding;

God be in mine eyes,
and in my looking;

God be in my mouth,
and in my speaking;

God be in my heart,
and in my thinking;

God be at mine end,
and at my departing.

Horæ beatæ Mariæ Virginis
London 1514

Possibly of French origin

Opening prayers

Lord God,
whose blessed Son our Saviour
gave his back to the smiters
and did not hide his face from shame:
give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Alternative Service Book)

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.

Hymn

Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

Of his deliverance I will boast,
till all that are distressed
from my example comfort take
and charm their griefs to rest.

O magnify the Lord with me,
with me exalt his name;
when in distress to him I called
he to my rescue came.

Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;
make you his service your delight,
your wants shall be his care.

Nahum Tate (1652-1715)

Nicholas Brady (1659-1726)

Click to see & hear:

[Through all the
changing scenes of life](#)

‘Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.’

The words are by **Viktor Frankl** - Austrian psychotherapist and holocaust survivor - whose theories that the primary motivation of an individual is for meaning in life, were hammered into reality by his personal experiences of suffering in the Nazi concentration camps of WWII.

Frankl was a devout Jew, born in Vienna in 1905, where his early interest in psychology and a correspondence with Sigmund Freud, all led to him becoming a student at the University of Vienna Medical School. With a doctorate in medicine in 1930, Frankl eventually established a private psychiatric practice.

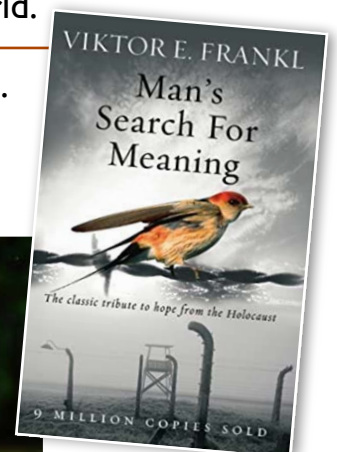
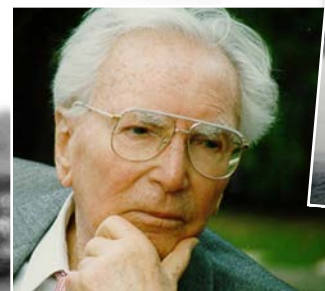


Germany annexed Austria in 1938, and with anti-semitism on the rise, Frankl and his family were sent to Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1942, where his father died. Two years later the remaining family were taken to Auschwitz and his

mother was exterminated. It was here that Frankl, observing the brutality and degradation around him, recognised that those inmates who could give meaning to their lives - even in such appalling conditions - were more likely to survive.

Viktor Frankl himself survived, and from the horror and loss of the concentration camps, emerged **‘Man’s Search for Meaning’**, a book that was read by, and would influence, millions of people in countries throughout the world.

In our reading from Romans, Paul writes about God and suffering ... a theme that Chris continues to explore in his sermon on page 9.



Click here to
view an -
[Interview with
Dr Viktor Frankl](#)

Hymn - God who made the earth

God who made the earth,
the air, the sky, the sea,
who gave the light its birth,
careth for me.

God who made the grass,
the flow'r, the fruit, the tree,
the day and night to pass,
careth for me.

God who made the sun,
the moon, the stars, is he
who, when life's clouds come on,
careth for me.

God who sent his Son
to die on Calvary,
he if I lean on him,
will care for me.

Sarah Betts Rhodes (1829-1904)

Click to hear:
[God who made the earth,
the air, the sky, the sea](#)



Flowers at Bunyan Meeting



The flowers for the Communion Table this Sunday *would* have been provided by **Margaret Marshall** in memory of her **parents** and **sister**.

Reading - Romans 8: 26-39

Click to see & hear Irene read: [Romans 8: 26-39](#)

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response 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, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

‘For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hymn - In heavenly love abiding

Click to hear: [In heavenly love abiding](#)

In heavenly abiding,
no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me,
my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me,
and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me,
no want shall turn me back;
my Shepherd is beside me,
and nothing can I lack:
his wisdom ever waketh,
his sight is never dim,
he knows the way he taketh,
and I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me,
which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will soon be o'er me,
where dark the clouds have been;
my hope I cannot measure,
my path in life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure,
and he will walk with me.

Anna Laetitia Waring (1823-1910)

Shepherdess with sheep (detail)
Anton Maouve (1838-1888)





Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.'



He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about thirty kilograms of flour until it worked all through the dough.'



'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.'



'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.'



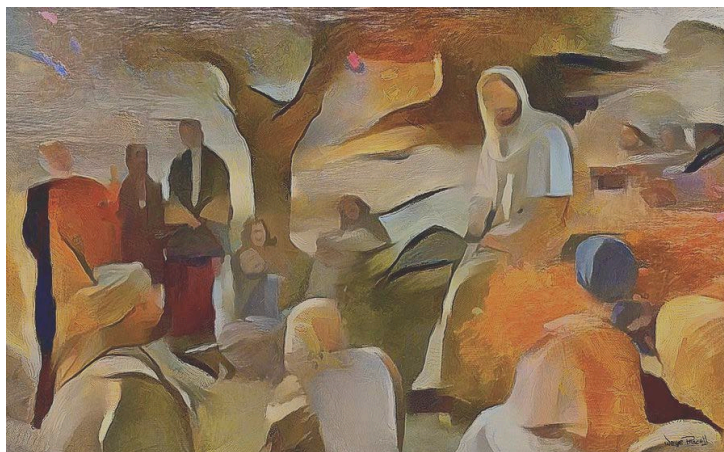
'Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'



'Have you understood all these things?' Jesus asked.

'Yes,' they replied.

He said to them, 'Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.'



Come Unto Me
Wayne Pascall

Anthem - I lift my eyes to the quiet hills

Click to hear:
[I lift my eyes to
the quiet hills](#)



*I lift my eyes
to the quiet hills
in the press of a busy day;
as green hills stand
in a dusty land
so God is my strength and stay.*

*I lift my eyes
to the quiet hills
to a calm that is mine to share;
secure and still
in the Father's will
and kept by the Father's care.*

*I lift my eyes
to the quiet hills
with a prayer as I turn to sleep;
by day, by night,
through the dark and light
my Shepherd will guard his sheep.*

*I lift my eyes
to the quiet hills
and my heart to the Father's throne;
in all my ways
to the end of days
the Lord will preserve his own.*

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926)

Sermon by the Rev'd Chris Damp

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him ..."

Romans 8 v 28

Leslie Weatherhead, one time minister of the City Temple, said that the illustration of the Persian carpet taught him a wonderful lesson. In a carpet workshop, boys sit on planks at various levels behind the carpet, working away, whilst the artist sits on the other side and shouts instructions to them, telling them which coloured thread to place where. Often on such a carpet there is a patch of colour here or there which seems out of place, for it does not fit the pattern. Weatherhead commented that when a boy makes a mistake, the artist usually does not make him take out the misplaced thread, but he weaves the mistakes into the pattern.



This is surely a parable of life. We are working on the wrong side of the carpet. In our ignorance we may place the wrong colours in the wrong place, or the circumstances and challenges of life place those wrong colours in place for us. So our mistakes and the circumstances of our lives spoil the pattern. But God is such a great artist that He can take all our experiences and circumstances and He adds to the pattern of our lives and somehow weaves them into His own perfect

purpose and plan. No mistake can be made that He is not ready to weave into His exquisite pattern. No life event or circumstance can divert His purpose ultimately,

or finally spoil His plan. If we go on co-operating with God in faith, putting our lives into His hands He will work with us for our good and one day bring us to the goal of our desires and the fullness of His divine purpose.

Paul speaks of this in our reading “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.....” Paul is saying that God co-operates with us, working constantly for our good and making the best of all that life brings our way.

Life is never easy and there are times when suffering, misfortune and tragedy can cause us to question a belief in a good and loving God. I once encountered a man who had lost his faith following the Aberfan disaster. He had been a deacon at his church, but after that tragedy, he never attended church again and rejected the idea of a loving God. If God could allow this, of what use is He? Many have lost their faith by viewing suffering and misfortune in this way.

Blaming God for the results of our own folly, human sin, wickedness, cruelty and the mixture of circumstances which cause suffering and difficulty, well this is utterly fatal to faith. Human freedom is a fact, and sometimes a terrible fact. War, inhumanity, greed, selfishness, all these things are a result of that freedom and such things wreak havoc in human affairs.

It is often difficult to separate suffering and evil from the action or inaction of God. Yet even mistakenly laying blame at the door of God, can never ultimately defeat His purposes. In Christ, we discover a God who refuses to make terms with evil. He outlasts the furies of humankind and His love remains, when human wickedness has done its worst.



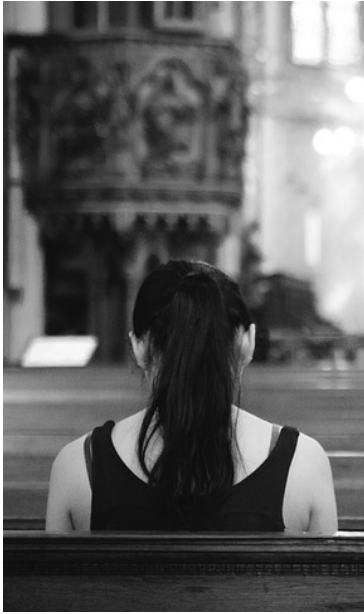
'Isenheim Altarpiece' (detail)

Matthias Grünewald between 1512-1516

The evils and sufferings which afflict us are not the will of God, but instead are those very things that took Him to the cross. And yet behind them all, Paul tells us that His love remains constant, nothing can ever separate us from this love and this is the ground of our hope.

We cannot blame God for the troubles that beset us in life. But we can be certain of this one thing, that God is able to journey with us into every situation and meet with us in our need, and He seeks our ultimate good. The chance happenings of life, the unexpected, the inexplicable will always affect us, but how they affect us will depend upon whether we face them alone or with God by our side.

There is no situation so desperate into which God cannot enter and offer His divine aid and powerful interest. This is the gospel of hope and comfort. If we face life with God by our side, surely we can say with Paul, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (v 37)



This helps us to understand the words of our text: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him ...”

We know that though we love God we may suffer illness, taste misfortune, endure straitened circumstances, our name might be slandered, our friends may desert us, our world may fall apart. Each one of us will have our fair share of trouble. So how can it be said then that “God works for the good of those who love Him”?

It can be said in this very great and glorious sense. If we allow God into all the events of our living, even the sad and painful things, He will somehow bring something of good out of it. In the midst of our suffering, we can

seldom glimpse any good whatsoever and we may well doubt the words of our text. But God can take even our most dreadful suffering and ultimately bring forth something of value from it.

Paul was no stranger to suffering, but he spoke from experience when he said that ultimately, God continually works for the good in all things. The difficulties and tragedies of life need not conquer us. Life may sometimes be dark and very painful, but we need not be the victim of our circumstances. We can endure and be made complete by living life in relationship with God.

A great musician once ordered the finest violin that money could buy. When he came to collect the instrument, he drew the bow over the strings and on hearing the tone, he became furious and dashed it to pieces, paid the price and left the violin maker's shop. The violin maker gathered up the pieces and set to work remaking the instrument. The musician was sent for and again drew the bow over the strings of the instrument. The violin this time was perfect. He asked the price. “Nothing” the violin maker replied. “This is the same instrument you broke to pieces. I put the shattered fragments together again and now you have a perfect instrument.”

Our lives may be broken in suffering and sorrow, but God helps us to take up the shattered fragments of life, and with Him we are able to piece something together which can make a new life which yields praise and blessing.

We are not immune from suffering and tragedy, but we can each become an individual who cannot be conquered by fate. And this is possible to the degree with which we meet every misfortune, every trial, every difficulty in the strength and power that God lovingly gives. We can indeed become “more than conquerors through Him who loved us”.

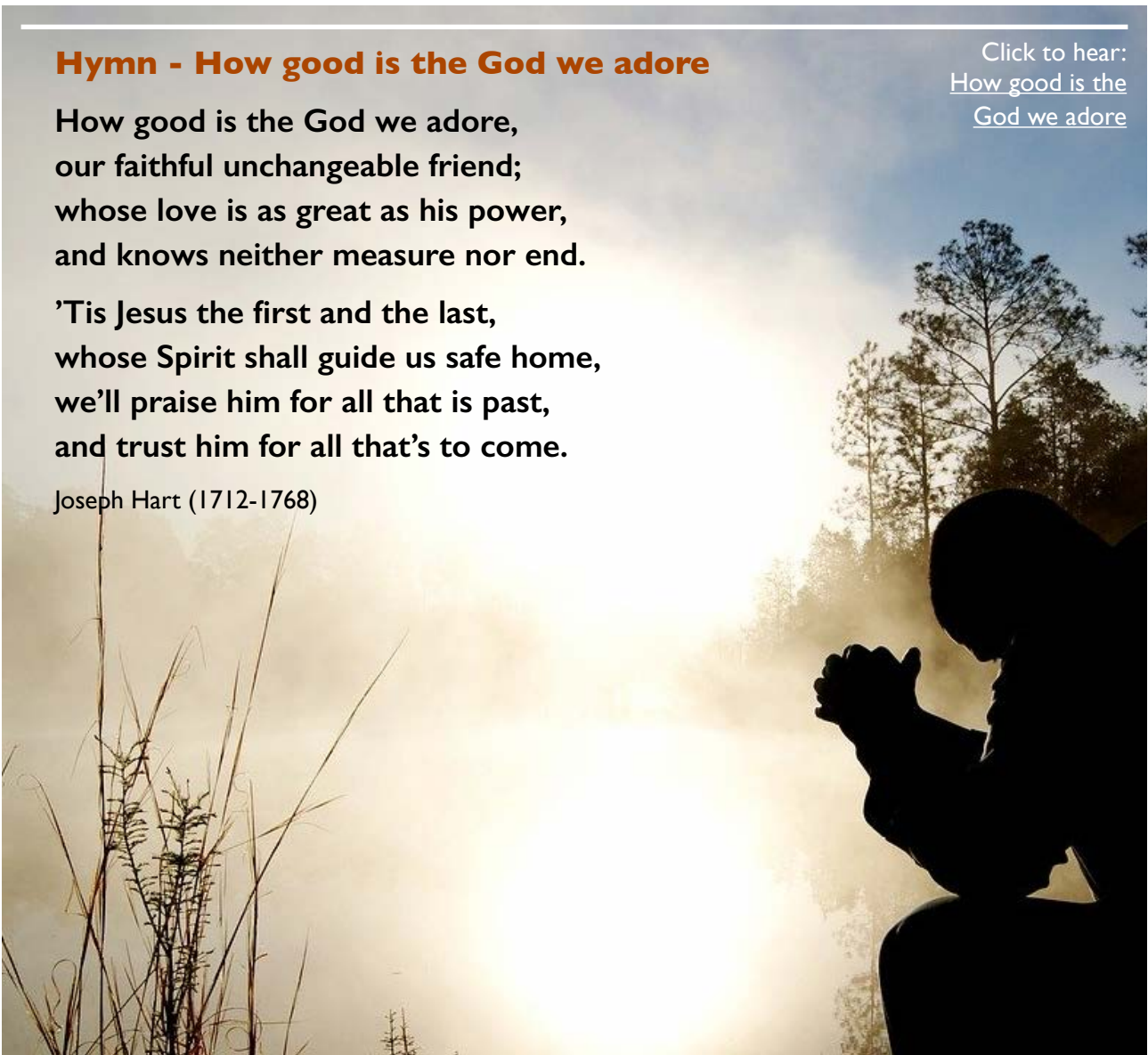
Hymn - How good is the God we adore

Click to hear:
[How good is the
God we adore](#)

How good is the God we adore,
our faithful unchangeable friend;
whose love is as great as his power,
and knows neither measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus the first and the last,
whose Spirit shall guide us safe home,
we'll praise him for all that is past,
and trust him for all that's to come.

Joseph Hart (1712-1768)



Prayers

Click to see & hear Allan: [Let us pray ...](#)

In these days of uncertainty about what the future may hold regarding Covid 19, as revised measures are implemented by the government in attempts to control the pandemic, as research continues to find a possible vaccine it would be easy for us to become sceptical about the existence of God and turn away from him, live our lives in spiritual isolation, allow darkness into our hearts but this would deny the fact that God sent his only son Jesus Christ to live amongst us here on earth, that the sacrifice made on that cross at Calvary was in vain and means nothing to us. Father we pray for your forgiveness on any such negative thoughts we may have. We thank you for being with us through the Holy Spirit at all times. We recall times in the past when we have been troubled and in a dark place and you have answered our prayers and shed light upon us, when we have prayed for others and they have received comfort and healing. We thank you for your presence with us at all times regardless of the situations that may be surrounding us.

As we begin to look at ways that we may be able to gather together again safely as a worshipping fellowship we pray for those involved in this process. Give them the wisdom to discern the way forward be this in traditional style, using modern technology or a combination of both but in all scenarios with the safety of your people in mind and to the Honour and Glory of God the Father.

We pray for the world at large and in particular where civil unrest has become the norm: may peace come to those troubled lands. We pray for people whose home is a refugee camp and they can see no future escape, for the many aid agencies who are working against time to bring what ever comfort they can. We pray for situations where there are political tensions between various countries, that diplomatic solutions may be found and although there maybe cultural differences a way forward may be agreed.



We pray for our local council here in Bedford and indeed in all other places who have been given powers to introduce or re-introduce lockdown procedures should the need arise in their areas of responsibility and for the inhabitants who may be affected that they follow the measures in place. We pray for the many shops and businesses as they re-open and have to adapt to a new way of working and for those who may have lost their jobs as a result of the coronavirus.

We remember those who have in past weeks and continue to do so work on the front line bringing care to those in need, all working in care homes, the NHS be it in a hospital

or the community, the fire and police service, those providing daily services like delivering the post, couriers delivering parcels, refuse collectors emptying our waste bins and those working in public transport.

Finally Father we pray for those members of our congregation who are in need at this moment be it due to sickness or due to anxiety about what the future may hold.

In Romans ch 9 v 35 we read, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword” and then in verses 37 – 39:

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, not anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Amen

Hymn - Love divine, all loves excelling

Click to see & hear:

[Love divine all loves
excelling](#)



Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

The Grace

And may the grace
of Our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God,
and the fellowship
of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, evermore.
Amen

Hymns in today's service are used By Permission. CCL Licence No. 3740

The texts are from the New International Version (UK) of the Bible



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Resources

In this Sunday's readings we heard from Paul, writing to the Christian church in Rome; and we also continued to hear the parables of Jesus as recorded by Matthew.

In **Romans 8: 26-39**, read by Irene, Paul talks about God working for the good of all who love him. Chris develops this understanding in his sermon and says: 'Life is never easy and there are times when suffering, misfortune and tragedy can cause us to question a belief in a good and loving God.'

The Bible Project has videos about three Old Testament books collectively known as 'The Wisdom Literature'. They, too, look at our relationship with God, what it is like to live well in this world, and what we understand by the 'good' and the 'bad' things that happen to us.



Click here to view these videos:

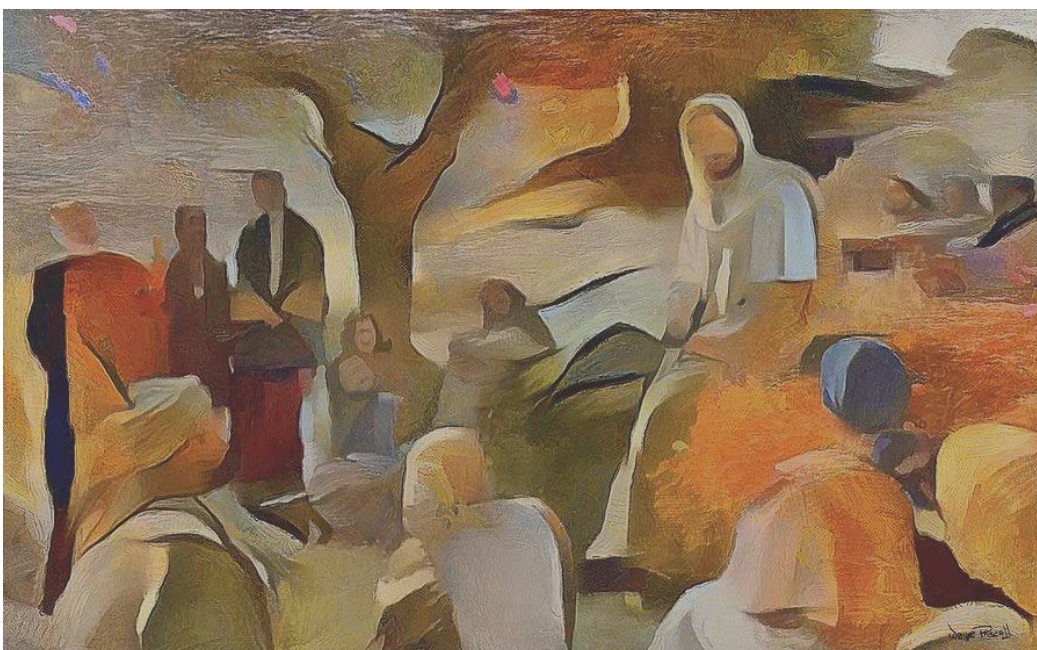
[The Bible Project - Proverbs](#)

[The Bible Project - Ecclesiastes](#)

[The Bible Project - Job](#)

In **Matthew 13: 31-33 & 44-52**, read by Brian, Jesus shares five parables about the kingdom of heaven with his followers: the mustard seed; the yeast in the dough; the treasure hidden in a field; the pearl of great price; and the fish caught in a net.

Two weeks ago Jesus' parable of the sower was featured in our Bunyan Meeting worship; and this week we've included The Bible Project video on the parables for you to look at again, if you would like to. [The Bible Project - The Parables](#)



Come Unto Me
Wayne Pascall

Activities - The Parable of the Mustard Seed / I

Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.' *Matthew 13: 31-32*



Click here to watch a video of the: [Parable of the mustard seed](#)

