

**Thattham URC - Fairtrade Worship**  
**A Short Reflective Service**  
**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2022, 10.30am**

**Welcome & Introduction**

Welcome to our service today as we start Fairtrade Fortnight, this year we are focussing on the growing challenges that climate change brings to farmers and workers in communities Fairtrade works with.

**Our Call to worship is from Proverbs 13**

"The fields of the poor may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away."

**A Prayer of approach followed by The Lords Prayer**

**Creator God**, as we come to you, let us remember that

You created a beautiful world for all your children.

As we taste and smell the fruits of this creation

help us to think of those who farm the land to grow them.

Help us live in a partnership of love and support

with those who produce our food and drink

so that we might enable others to feed their families

and create a sustainable future.

**Amen**

**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**

**Offertory & Dedication**

Lord God, In the fields of the poor, even when abundant fruits ripen,

Injustice sweeps them away, and families hunger.

Accept our offerings today and help us to share the fruits of Your bounty so that all Your family may benefit from Your gracious gifts

**Amen**

**Our first Bible Readings is from Psalm 104**

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, my soul.

LORD my God, you are very great;

you are clothed with splendour and majesty.

<sup>10</sup> He makes springs pour water into the ravines;

it flows between the mountains.

<sup>11</sup> They give water to all the beasts of the field;

the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

<sup>12</sup> The birds of the sky nest by the waters;

they sing among the branches.

<sup>13</sup> He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;

the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

<sup>14</sup> He makes grass grow for the cattle,

and plants for people to cultivate—

bringing forth food from the earth:

<sup>15</sup> wine that gladdens human hearts,

oil to make their faces shine,

and bread that sustains their hearts.

<sup>16</sup> The trees of the LORD are well watered,

the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

- <sup>17</sup> There the birds make their nests;  
the stork has its home in the junipers.
- <sup>18</sup> The high mountains belong to the wild goats;  
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.
- <sup>19</sup> He made the moon to mark the seasons,  
and the sun knows when to go down.
- <sup>20</sup> You bring darkness, it becomes night,  
and all the beasts of the forest prowl.
- <sup>21</sup> The lions roar for their prey  
and seek their food from God.
- <sup>22</sup> The sun rises, and they steal away;  
they return and lie down in their dens.
- <sup>23</sup> Then people go out to their work,  
to their labour until evening.
- <sup>24</sup> How many are your works, LORD!  
In wisdom you made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.
- <sup>25</sup> There is the sea, vast and spacious,  
teeming with creatures beyond number—  
living things both large and small.

### Hymn- For the Beauty of the Earth

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the beauty of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
Sun and moon and stars of light,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth, and friends above,  
Pleasures pure and undefiled,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For each perfect gift of thine,  
To our race so freely given,  
Graces human and divine,  
Flowers of earth and buds of heaven,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

### Our second bible reading is from Mark 4 1-20

#### The Parable of the Sower

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. <sup>2</sup>He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: <sup>3</sup>"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

<sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

<sup>10</sup>When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables.

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? <sup>14</sup> The farmer sows the word. <sup>15</sup> Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup> Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup> Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup> but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup> Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

## Reflection

Our readings from Psalm 104 and Mark 4 vary in many ways: their purpose, their setting, and when they were written, are all noticeably different. But they also have a lot in common. Both passages demonstrate an intimate knowledge of creation. The psalmist describes the beauty of creation, declaring, - *‘How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all;’* The author understood how creation works. They knew where the birds nest, and where the mountain goats live, the great skill of a lion as it hunts its prey, and the vast array of creatures living in the water. They knew creation intimately: they must have spent time observing and learning how all things fit together, and they were inspired to worship as a result! In verse 31 of the psalm, just after the part we’ve heard this morning, it says God rejoices in his creation. The beauty and variety of all he’s made brings God joy! Similarly, in our New Testament passage from Mark, Jesus demonstrates his own detailed understanding of creation. He describes the issues that can hinder the growth of crops: he knows how drought can cause plants to wither, or how rocky ground prevents the development of roots. Even though he was a carpenter by trade, he knew the importance of nutritious soil for a bountiful harvest. Jesus has an intimate knowledge of the workings of creation.

This shouldn’t be a surprise to us; the Bible tells us how all things were created for Jesus and by Jesus. In him, all things hold together: he’s Lord of all creation. It’s not a surprise that Jesus considers it important to observe the creation around us. But Jesus shows us something else too. He teaches us that not only does he have an intimate relationship with creation, but that also we can learn about our heavenly Father through it. Whether it’s through the relentlessness of weeds, the character of birds or the power of a mustard seed, time and again, Jesus points to the Father and the way he works through creation. We live in a busy world and often fail to take time to observe creation. From the psalms to the gospels, we see the ways creation can reveal more of God’s character and inspire us to worship, and we see how God delights and finds joy in all he’s made!

But when we look at the world today, we can see the many ways that we’ve damaged this beautiful gift God has given us. The ways that we live and work and consume have pushed creation to breaking point. Whether it’s plastic pollution littering seas and the poorest communities, or species going extinct at record rates, or the climate crisis making droughts, floods and storms more frequent and severe, we’ve misused and damaged this beautiful gift of God. We’re feeling some of the effects in the UK, but the impacts are hitting people in poverty the hardest. It’s hard to grasp what that really means: it’s big and abstract.

The science is clear: the climate crisis is being caused by us, especially us in developed nations, and the impacts are accelerating. We are running out of time to prevent the worst effects. We have to act fast and change the way we live, and governments have to be much more ambitious. But right now, we have a unique window of opportunity. How the government chooses to rebuild after the pandemic will shape our economy, climate and society in the decades to come. This is a crucial moment. In the Bible Jesus tells us the most important commandments are to love God, and to love our neighbours. Tackling the climate crisis is vital to both of these – honouring God by protecting his

creation and loving our global neighbours who are hit first and worst by what is now a climate emergency

Jesus didn't come just to reconcile us with our Father in heaven, but to reconcile and restore ALL things – in heaven and on earth! That's far more than just us. Jesus came to begin the restoration of the world to how God intended it to be. To make all things new. Jesus values creation, shows us how it reveals the love of the Father, and brings restoration and healing – uniting everything back with God. We can have hope. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, all things can be made new; everything sin has broken and corrupted is being restored and reconciled to God. And what's more, we can be part of it. Jesus invites us to participate in his mission in this world. The world is crying out, but God is at work and we're invited to join him in a ministry of reconciliation – reconciling people to their Father, but also reconciling people to the creation we've been given to steward, and seeing it restored. This is the fullness of the gospel, not a side issue

### Hymn- Beauty For Brokenness

Beauty for brokenness  
Hope for despair  
Lord, in the suffering  
This is our prayer  
Bread for the children  
Justice, joy, peace  
Sunrise to sunset  
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives  
Cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsman  
Trade for their skills  
Land for the dispossessed  
Rights for the weak  
Voices to plead the cause  
Of those who can't speak

***God of the poor  
Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame***

Refuge from cruel wars  
Havens from fear  
Cities for sanctuary  
Freedoms to share  
Peace to the killing-fields  
Scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness  
His cross for the pain

***Chorus***

Rest for the ravaged earth  
Oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned  
Our future, our dreams  
Lord, end our madness  
Carelessness, greed  
Make us content with  
The things that we need

***Chorus***

Lighten our darkness  
Breathe on this flame  
Until your justice  
Burns brightly again  
Until the nations  
Learn of your ways  
Seek your salvation  
And bring you their praise

***Chorus***

### ***Reflection continued***

In 2022 Fairtrade Fortnight is continuing to highlight the growing challenges that climate change brings to farmers and workers in the communities Fairtrade works with as, COP26 didn't seem to deliver the change needed to tackle the climate crisis. The facts are straightforward. Farmers and workers in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Honduras, who have done the least to contribute to climate change, are disproportionately affected by it. The climate crisis is the biggest threat to the livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers and agricultural workers in low-income countries worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us more than ever how interconnected we are globally. This interconnection is at the very heart of the Fairtrade message and is where our role begins. Farmers need better incomes and financial support to adapt to changing weather patterns and change their farming methods to ensure a low-carbon economy. By choosing Fairtrade, you show solidarity with those on the frontline of the climate crisis. You are part of the Fairtrade movement, and you have the power to drive long-term change, not only with your shopping choices but with your support in spreading the message.

[How Fairtrade is tackling the climate crisis - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xQP6tVlcxg)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xQP6tVlcxg>

### **Prayer**

**Father God**, we thank you that you are a God of justice.

Jesus, we are sorry for the ways we've damaged your creation. Help us make changes in our own lives to love our global neighbours well.

Holy Spirit, would you stir the hearts of members of our government, guide them in all their decision-making, and inspire them to protect the most vulnerable?

**Amen**

### **Intercessory Prayers**

**Lord**, we pray for farmers and producers across the world who are living with the ravages and fear of climate change threatening their livelihoods and income.

We pray for families and children who see their crops fail because of storms, floods and drought and who live from day to day not knowing from where their next meal will come.

We pray for world leaders and scientists – having seen how politicians are able to respond to emergencies like Covid-19 with substantial funding and support – we pray that they will also respond to the climate emergency with the same level of speed, commitment and investment to enable countries to recover from the pandemic sustainably, cleanly and fairly.

We pray for organisations working in poor communities to find and promote new ways of farming to protect the environment and to enable the sustainable development of community life. We pray for ourselves – that our commitment to justice may bear fruit in our lives, in the choices we make and in the priorities we set ourselves.

We pray for the Fairtrade movement – for all who campaign and spread the message. May our love to each other and to your creation deepen our commitment and determination so that our voices will be heard more loudly and that the impact of our campaigning will increase.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

**Thank you** for joining us today, here at church, online or reading at home.

May we live as Jesus would live, May we speak the words Jesus would speak, May we do what Jesus would do, May we pray as Jesus would pray, May we trust as Jesus would trust, May we love as Jesus would love. **Amen**

**And so, to you, our dear Church Family and Friends,**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.

**Amen**