

**Winchester, Eastleigh, and Romsey Circuit  
Worship at home sheet - 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
Prepared by Revd Ruth Fry**

Donna Adkins (b. 1940)

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**Opening prayer**

Gracious God,  
As we prepare to meet with you,  
help us to be aware of your presence this day.  
As we bring you our worship  
And offer you our praise  
Draw near to us now  
As we draw near to you

**Amen**

**Listen, read, pray, or sing along**

[https://youtu.be/LPVN3NjbJ\\_U?si=yBXnL1JsWHcl4aeG](https://youtu.be/LPVN3NjbJ_U?si=yBXnL1JsWHcl4aeG)

Father, we love you,  
we worship and adore you :  
glorify your name  
in all the earth.  
Glorify your name,  
glorify your name,  
glorify your name,  
in all the earth.

Jesus, we love you,  
we worship and adore you :  
glorify your name  
in all the earth.  
Glorify your name,  
glorify your name,  
glorify your name,  
in all the earth.

Spirit, we love you,  
we worship and adore you :  
glorify your name  
in all the earth.  
Glorify your name,  
glorify your name,  
glorify your name,  
in all the earth.

**Prayers**

Gracious and Holy God,  
we praise and adore you for all that you are and  
for all you have done.  
We bring you our thanks for the beauty  
of creation.  
For the birds of the air,  
the fish of the seas,  
For every living creature, plant, and flower.  
We bring you our thanks for the joy of human  
relationships, for friends and family, for  
neighbours and strangers alike.

We confess that although we are thankful, we  
often fail to live our lives to the full.  
We sometimes struggle to recognize you in  
others and in the world around us,  
we are quick to judge and slow to understand.  
When we are impatient with ourselves and with  
others forgive us, we pray. In the name of Christ,  
our saviour **Amen.**

**Read** Philippians 3 v4b-14

**Read** Matthew 21 v33-46

**Reflection**

In our Gospel reading this week, Jesus tells the  
chief priest and elders a parable about some  
tenants who make dreadful decisions which are  
rooted in greed, arrogance, disrespect, and  
selfishness. A landowner, Jesus says, lovingly  
planted a vineyard, leased it to some tenants, and  
travelled to another country. When harvest time  
came, the landowner sent his servants to the  
vineyard to collect his share of the produce. But  
the tenants seized the servants. They beat one,  
killed another, and stoned the third.

In response, the landowner sent a second group  
of servants to the vineyard — but the tenants  
killed them as well. Finally, the landowner

decided to send his own son to try and reason with the tenants. Surely, the landowner thought, “they will respect my son.”

They did not. When the tenants saw the heir of the vineyard approaching, they hatched a plan to murder him and claim his inheritance. They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and murdered him.

Jesus concludes the parable with a question for the chief priests and the elders: “When the landowner returns to his vineyard, what will he do to those tenants?”

In my NRSV Bible this story is called “The Parable of the Wicked Tenants,” Jesus tells it to critique the religious leaders of his day for exploiting and mistreating God’s people — the people of Israel, God’s “vineyard.” It’s a story which is intended to expose the religious elite and their obsession with privilege and power. The implication is that the chief priests and elders are like the wicked tenants. They abuse their authority, dishonour God’s house, and mistreat both God’s messengers (the Prophets) and God’s son (Jesus).

It seems to me that at the heart of this parable is the fact that the tenants in the story neglect to understand — or perhaps very deliberately choose to ignore — that they are *stewards* rather than *owners* of the vineyard. When the landowner asks for his rightful share of the harvest, the tenants take offense. How presumptuous of them! The vineyard doesn’t belong to them. Somewhere along the way, the tenants seem to have forgotten this. It belongs, all of it, to the landowner. Theirs is not a vocation of ownership; it is a vocation of caring, tending, safeguarding, cultivating, and protecting — on behalf of another.

The landowner has chosen the tenants and has trusted them to steward the vineyard for the benefit of all.

Humanity it would appear has, like the tenants in the parable, somehow forgotten that this is God’s earth and we have been trusted to steward it and not to behave as though we own it. Like the tenants we have ignored and ridiculed the countless messengers who have warned us over the years that our rapacious relationship with the planet will surely lead us to destruction.

What is it about human beings that we crave ownership? Why are we so keen to possess things, to control them? We tell ourselves that things exist primarily to gratify our desires. Stewardship rather than ownership just doesn’t seem to cut it with us. Somehow it insults our core sense of entitlement and threatens our identity as consumers.

When it comes to the earth, the bottom line is quite clear in Scripture: we are NOT owners. We are caretakers of a vineyard God cares about deeply, a vineyard that will not thrive or even survive if we continue to treat it as a cheap, inexhaustible commodity.

In the world of today 8.8 million tons of plastic waste enter the ocean every year and no less than a quarter of all mammals are currently threatened with extinction. Sea levels are set to rise by 1 to 8 feet by 2100. It’s scary stuff it really is.

The difference for us is that our vocation as stewards of God’s creation is not time limited, its ongoing. Our relationship with the landowner is eternal. God has placed absolute trust in humanity to steward the earth.

If like me, you were deeply troubled by the recent announcement made by the Prime Minister on net zero policies I would encourage you to read the Joint Public Issues Team statement which has been signed by both our Methodist President and Vice President.

<https://jpit.uk/church-leaders-respond-to-net-zero-announcement>

In the passage from Philippians Paul reminds us that whatever we may consider to be a gain in this life is ultimately nothing compared to the knowledge that we belong to Christ.

*'I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus'* (Philippians 3 v14)

Christ died that we might live. Surely then we more than owe it to our Saviour to do all in our power to be the very best possible stewards of God's wonderful creation.

**Listen, read, pray, or sing along**

<https://youtu.be/GlwDCmTkRhM?si=602VJk8YC AwPXgt>

And can it be that I should gain  
an interest in the Saviour's blood ?  
Died he for me, who caused his pain ?  
For me, who him to death pursued ?  
Amazing love ! How can it be  
that thou, my God, should die for me ?

'Tis mystery all : the Immortal dies !  
Who can explore his strange design ?  
In vain the first-born seraph tries  
to sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all ! Let earth adore,  
let angel minds enquire no more.

He left his Father's throne above —  
so free, so infinite his grace —  
emptied himself of all but love,  
and bled for Adam's helpless race.  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free ;  
for, O my God, it found out me !

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
fast bound in sin and nature's night ;  
thine eye diffused a quickening ray —  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,  
my chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

No condemnation now I dread ;  
Jesus, and all in him, is mine !

Alive in him, my living Head,  
and clothed in righteousness divine,  
bold I approach the eternal throne,  
and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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## Intercessions

Gracious God,  
we pray for the world you created, and for all people

- for countries caught up in war or violent conflict,
- for those whose homes and lives are threatened by natural disaster
- For those seeking refuge far from home

For these and all the other areas in our world

where there is need and despair,  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for our nation and for all its people:

- for the government
- for our judicial system
- for our cities, towns, and rural communities,
- for employers and employees, for young and old,

For all who seek to serve the common good  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for our local community

- for those who are unemployed,
- for those in prison,
- for those who are hungry,
- for those who are alone and afraid,

For all our neighbours, both known and unknown to us,  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the church

- for those who are ill. or whose loved ones are ill,
- for those who are anxious about the future,
- for those struggling with their faith,
- for those who minister among us,

For all Your people in this place,

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

Pour out Your Spirit on us!

Fix our hearts and minds on what is true and honourable and right.

Give us the joy and peace that comes from knowing and doing Your will.

Keep us faithful to the call we have received in Christ Jesus, our Lord, extending Your loving invitation to the world around us.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Offering and Prayer of Dedication**

*If you give your weekly offering through an envelope scheme or in cash, please set it aside, and pray with those who give using Standing orders.*

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### **Listen, read, pray, or sing along**

<https://youtu.be/IJ6pmSEzJ5A?si=0kro-8p64BxUPGsQ>

O thou who camest from above  
the pure celestial fire to impart,  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
on the mean altar of my heart !

There let it for thy glory burn  
with inextinguishable blaze,  
and trembling to its source return,  
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
to work, and speak, and think for thee ;  
still let me guard the holy fire,  
and still stir up thy gift in me —

Ready for all thy perfect will,  
my acts of faith and love repeat,  
till death thy endless mercies seal,  
and make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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### **Closing prayer**

The light of God to lead us  
The power of God to hold us  
The joy of God to heal us  
The grace of God to caress us  
The love of God to bless us  
**Amen.**

Resources used:

<https://www.journeywithjesus.net/lectionary-essays>

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