

Kingdom tales

A holiday service for all ages

Planning

Background

July and August are the most popular months for holidays and this service draws upon the holiday feeling of the time of year. Many people take holidays at other times, though, and to create a holiday-space it will be good to ask people to contribute recent postcards and souvenirs to display around the worship space. Into these holiday scenes we place some of the kingdom parables that form the readings from Matthew's Gospel in the weekly material in this issue of ROOTS. Holidays are about a rest and a break from work, an idea enshrined in the first creation story in Genesis. The short, comic dialogue that opens this service provides this biblical context.

Prepare the space

- Display a large map at the front of the worship space. It might be of the UK, or Europe or the world. Use whatever you think will enable people from your own community to share their holiday experiences.
- Around the worship space, create a number of stations, each with a sign and some artefacts, as follows, to represent different kinds of holiday to match one of Matthew's parables:
- **Beach holiday:** some sand, shells, towel, etc. (The parable of the net: Matthew 13.47-50.)



- **Countryside tour:** a tray of earth, some plants and rocks, etc. (The parable of the mustard seed, Matthew 13.31-32.)
- **City shopping break:** handbags and purses, paper 'boutique' shopping bags, lifestyle magazines, a box of beads, buttons and shiny trinkets, etc. (The parable of the pearl, Matthew 13.45-46.)
- **Gourmet experiences:** kitchen items and a pile of flour emptied onto a tray. (The parable of the yeast, Matthew 13.33.)



- **Treasure trail:** a pile of guide books, binoculars, a trowel, even a metal detector if you can get one! (The parable of the hidden treasure, Matthew 13.44.)
- Provide pads of sticky notes, a pile of paper, some postcard-sized pieces of card and a box of pens, pencils and crayons at each station.
- Appoint a person to read the Bible reading associated with each station.

Gather

Call to worship

Jesus says, Come to me all of you.
Come if you like noise,
excitement and celebration.
Come if you like quiet and calm
and a chance to catch your breath.
Come if you want to grow
and learn and change.
Come to me,
all who work and strive
and I will give you rest.

A short drama

I will give you rest

The reporter could be holding a microphone or a notebook and should sound very excited to begin with, becoming increasingly confused as the interview doesn't go to plan. God should be very relaxed and calm throughout.

Reporter: Good morning, I'm here today, on the sixth day of creation, for an exclusive interview... with God himself! God, good morning.

God: Good morning.

Reporter: First of all, congratulations on creation so far, the heavens, the oceans, the trees, the aardvark, you must be very pleased.

God: Well yes, I don't like to blow my own trumpet but it does all look very good to me.

Reporter: Everyone is desperate to know what's next on your agenda. There's talk of unicorns, dragons, calorie-free chocolate? Can you give us any clues as to what happens next?

God: Certainly, Weston-super-Mare! (*a local seaside place*)

Reporter: Ummm, I'm sorry God, but I think *Weston-super-Mare* was created on day three when you separated the land from the sea, wasn't it?

God: Oh I'm not creating it, I'm visiting it. It's time for a short holiday.

Reporter: I'm sorry? What about creation?

God: It's done. Everything's in place, and now I'm going to rest.

Reporter: But you're God. You don't need to rest; surely there must be something else that needs creating? What about sliced bread?

God: There's always something else that needs doing. If I followed that logic I'd never rest at all. Anyway, I've created people, they'll get to sliced bread eventually.

Reporter: But you could make things better, make more of it, aren't you worried that people will accuse you of being lazy?

God: I'm hoping they'll follow my example. Creation is already very good, I've done my work and now it's time to rest – that's always been my pattern. > LOOKS AT REPORTER IN A CONCERNED WAY. What about you? You're looking a bit peaky – need to take a break?

Reporter: Erm, erm well, you know, work's been a bit, erm, > LOOKS PANICKY. Well, back to the studio!

A prayer of approach

Let us give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

His love endures for ever.

He gathers us in from many lands, from the east, from the west, from the north and from the south.

We give thanks to the Lord for he is good. Amen.

Word & response

Each of the stations will be the site of a short Bible reading.

Invite people to 'choose a holiday' and visit the station that represents their choice. On arrival at the stations they should first be invited to interact with what they see. You might like to offer simple drinks and food as people look at what they find, talk about what they see and perhaps touch and play with the items displayed. Then invite people to sit down and listen to a story from their holiday destination. People might draw up chairs, sit on cushions or simply stand around to listen. Each reader begins

When Jesus spoke to the crowds, he often used parables; just as the prophet had proclaimed, 'I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.' Listen then, to the parable of the...

The relevant parable is then read at each station.

People are then invited to respond to this experience. They might like to write a postcard to someone, and illustrate it. They could write some thoughts on a sticky note and leave it at the station alongside the other items, or draw a

picture. Some people might prefer just to play with what they find at the station.

After a suitable period, invite people to return to the main gathering. As they do so, and when they arrive, invite them to tell other people about their 'trip' and the story they heard.

Prayer

A prayer of confession

We ask the Lord to forgive those times when our hearts have been fixed on ourselves and not on the kingdom of heaven.

Lord Jesus,
you have won for us the treasure of forgiveness and life.
Forgive us our ingratitude when we turn away from you.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus,
you bring us the treasure of the Father's love.
Forgive us our hardheartedness when we reject the needs of others.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus,
in the family of your Church you give us the treasure of your presence and strength.
Forgive us our apathy when we fail to spend time with you.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, in your great mercy, forgive us all our sins and lead us into everlasting life. Amen.

Prayer of intercession and thanksgiving

Pass round bowls of tiny, mixed seeds and invite people to put one into their cupped hand and look at it, noticing its colour, how tiny it is, its exact shape and anything else they see.

Invite people to think of someone who is small and fragile, and to pray for their protection.

Invite people to think of something wonderful and to give thanks.

Invite people to pray for projects and things that they know are just beginning, for good growth and success.

Then say the Lord's Prayer together.

Sending out

Invite everyone to go to the door. Explain that a very old worship tradition was for a final passage of the Bible, from one of the Gospels, to be read as people were about to leave, giving them a thought to take away with them and guide them through the week. So read from the words of Jesus in Matthew 13:

The disciples came to Jesus and asked him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' He answered, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven...blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.... "I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world."'

(Matthew 13.10,11a,16-17,35b)

Final prayer

Go in peace;
live the kingdom;
share its treasures;
keep the faith.

And may God the Father bless you,
God the Son inspire you
and God the Holy Spirit enlighten you
now and always.

Amen.

HYMNS AND SONGS

The following hymns and songs are appropriate for this service.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
From heaven you came, helpless babe
Open your ears Christian people (William Jabusch)
Inspired by love and anger (WGWG)
Jesus priceless treasure (Jesu meine Freude)
Small things count (BBP)
Just a tiny seed (BBP)
Faith as small as a mustard seed (KS)



See the **WEB** for
An all age service,
'To boldly go...',
which celebrates the
new school year.