

Worship at home – 12th July 2020

Key: Scriptures: Matthew 13:1-9 – The parable of the sower

And Jesus concluded, “Listen, then, if you have ears!” (Verse 9)

Key Themes: What sort of soil are we?

Call to Worship:

We all love a good story; we can't wait to hear how it ends.
Come and worship the Lord God, author of our stories – each one so different, but if properly rooted in God, they can be amazing.
Come and hear God's story for us today, and make it part of your story.
Amen.

Hymn: I am planting seeds of love in my heart

I am planting seeds of love in my heart
I am planting seeds of love in my heart
And as they grow, I'll take them everywhere I go
I am planting seeds of love in my heart

Chorus:
And as they grow
They overflow
In every part
Of my heart
Heart to heart
Friend to friend
Sing it out again!

I am planting seeds of peace in my heart
I am planting seeds of peace in my heart
And as they grow, I'll take them everywhere I go
I am planting seeds of peace in my heart

Chorus:

I am planting seeds of song in my heart
I am planting seeds of song in my heart
And as they grow, I'll take them everywhere I go
I am planting seeds of song in my heart

Chorus:

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Prayers:

Lord, we might not be sitting by a lake to day.

However, as the crowds eagerly gathered to listen to the stories and truths you told them, we too await your word to us.

With joy in our hearts, and anticipation, we pray that you will give us listening ears, and hearts open to receive your love, your teaching, and your wisdom.

Help our lives to be full to bursting, bearing your fruit.

Amen.

Lord, it is so good to read your Word, and hear the parables you told. But, Lord, we can't leave it there.

We must take note of the explanation, and work it out in own lives.

Help us, O Lord, to listen, to learn and to act.

Amen.

For the times when we dash haphazardly into your presence, finding it hard to leave behind our cares and worries;

Forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times when we don't learn from our experiences;

Forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times when we don't take care of ourselves, or the people we share our lives with;

Forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times we don't see what you want us to see and just take things at face value;

Forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times when we want our seed planted in neat rows, when our own plans become more important than yours, rather than letting the Holy Spirit prepare the soil of our lives and blow where the Spirit wants to;

Forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

Amen.

Psalm 65 Good News Translation (GNT)

Praise and Thanksgiving

65 O God, it is right for us to praise you in Zion

and keep our promises to you,

² because you answer prayers.

People everywhere will come to you

³ on account of their sins.

Our faults defeat us,

but you forgive them.

⁴ Happy are those whom you choose,
whom you bring to live in your sanctuary.

We shall be satisfied with the good things of your house,
the blessings of your sacred Temple.

⁵ You answer us by giving us victory,
and you do wonderful things to save us.

People all over the world
and across the distant seas trust in you.

⁶ You set the mountains in place by your strength,
showing your mighty power.

⁷ You calm the roar of the seas
and the noise of the waves;
you calm the uproar of the peoples.

⁸ The whole world stands in awe
of the great things that you have done.

Your deeds bring shouts of joy
from one end of the earth to the other.

⁹ You show your care for the land by sending rain;
you make it rich and fertile.

You fill the streams with water;
you provide the earth with crops.

This is how you do it:

¹⁰ you send abundant rain on the ploughed fields
and soak them with water;
you soften the soil with showers
and cause the young plants to grow.

¹¹ What a rich harvest your goodness provides!
Wherever you go there is plenty.

¹² The pastures are filled with flocks;
the hillsides are full of joy.

¹³ The fields are covered with sheep;
the valleys are full of wheat.

Everything shouts and sings for joy.

Reflection:

- The psalmist paints a beautiful picture with his words.
- A picture of Rich and fertile land and clear flowing streams of water.

- Of pastures covered with sheep and fields full of wheat.
- Everything shouts and sings for joy.
- This hope that one day everything will be well with the world is something for us to hold on too.
- Lockdown has been a difficult time for everyone, some have coped better than others, but it has not been easy.
- I for one had found the tasks of ministry and home school teacher have been hard to juggle at times.
- But to hold on to a picture that conjures up something new and beautiful gives me hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel.
- My prayer is that it offers you a similar hope.

Reading: Matthew 13:1-9

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus left the house and went to the lakeside, where he sat down to teach. ² The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it, while the crowd stood on the shore. ³ He used parables to tell them many things.

“Once there was a man who went out to sow grain. ⁴ As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some of it fell on rocky ground, where there was little soil. The seeds soon sprouted, because the soil wasn't deep. ⁶ But when the sun came up, it burned the young plants; and because the roots had not grown deep enough, the plants soon dried up. ⁷ Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ But some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants bore grain: some had one hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty.”

⁹ And Jesus concluded, “Listen, then, if you have ears!”

Matthew 13:18-23 Good News Translation (GNT)

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

¹⁸ “Listen, then, and learn what the parable of the sower means. ¹⁹ Those who hear the message about the Kingdom but do not understand it are like the seeds that fell along the path. The Evil One comes and snatches away what was sown in them. ²⁰ The seeds that fell on rocky ground stand for those who receive the message gladly as soon as they hear it. ²¹ But it does not sink deep into them, and they don't last long. So when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, they give up at once. ²² The seeds that fell among thorn bushes stand for those who hear the message; but the worries about this life and the love for riches choke the

message, and they don't bear fruit. ²³ And the seeds sown in the good soil stand for those who hear the message and understand it: they bear fruit, some as much as one hundred, others sixty, and others thirty."

Reflection:

- Jesus, the master storyteller, also paints pictures in the minds of his listeners and he does this to communicate deep truths about people and about the work of God.
- Jesus in our readings for the next few weeks uses a set of parables and through them he is communicating aspects of the Kingdom of God.
- The reading today is presented in two halves.
- In the first, Jesus tells a story about the sowing of seeds, something most of his listeners would have known about and understood.
- Within the story, Jesus notes reasons why the seed falling in each of the four different places might be more or less productive.
- Then he calls on the crowd to listen.
- And he implies that not only should they listen but that they should hear.
- In the second half as Jesus explains the meaning of his story, it is clear that the different growing situations are metaphors for different responses to the word of the kingdom.
- As such, they help explain why Jesus' message is not received with acclaim by all of Israel.
- Various factors affected how the same 'seed' of God's word fared in different circumstances in Jesus' time:
- Some were distracted by forces against God – the evil one.
- Some by hostility from others.
- Some by worries of life and concerns for wealth.
- And some seeds grew.
- I guess this parable is as apt today as it was in Jesus' day.
- Think about lockdown and how the message of God's word has been out there via social media, and other mediums.
- Many people have been searching for hope and maybe the gospel is where they have turned.
- However, now that things are beginning to change how might this parable relate?
- Maybe some hear the message at first but now the pressure of returning to 'Normal' might have snatched it away and God has been metaphorically thrown out of the window.
- Maybe some have the rocky soil in their hearts and the word had not grown deep roots and at the first sign of trouble the roots are uprooted and the seed is no more.
- Maybe some have been choked by the worries of life and the lure of wealth and so no fruit is produced.
- And maybe some of those that have heard the message have hearts full of good soil and so the seed of faith has grown into a flourishing plant.

- I guess there have been days during lockdown when all of these states can be recognised in ourselves.
- I for one know that there have been days when everything felt like it was all crowding in and I was being choked by the presence of many different things.
- However, my hope is that over all it has been a time when we have been able to go deeper with God.
- Where we have been able to dig our roots deep into him and so our seed of faith has flourished into something beautiful.
- My prayer is for each of us that we can learn and grow through this experience of lockdown so that we will be more able and willing to share our stories as Jesus shared his.
- Amen

Prayers of Intercession:

Lord God, we pray today for all the people given the great privilege of spreading your gospel. In particular we pray for those ordained at the Methodist Conference last week. Although it was virtual we prayed a blessing on all of them and ask that you go with them in their ministry. We also pray for the New President of Conference Revd. Richard Teal and Vice-President Carolyn Lawrence and they begin their year in their new roles.

We pray for our ministers, who prayerfully seek your face, and bring us the words and understanding we need to become more faithful followers of you.

We pray for writers and poets, as they pore over your word, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring your message to life on the page.

We pray for artists and all craftspeople who draw inspiration from your word, and speak to us through their creations.

We pray for those we know who are sick, lonely or in need of our prayers at this time, we think particularly of:

Paul Davies – Seaton

Pam Lucas – Seaton

Brain Margetts – Dalwood

Mary Berry – Dalwood.

Audrey Hicks – Axminster

Amen

Hymn: Seek Ye First

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

And His righteousness

And all these things shall be added unto you
Allelu, alleluia

Man does not live by bread alone
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God
Allelu, alleluia

Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and ye shall find
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you
Allelu, alleluia

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And His righteousness
And all these things shall be added unto you
Allelu, alleluia
Man does not live by bread alone
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God
Allelu, alleluia

Songwriters: Karen Lafferty © Universal Music Publishing Group
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Blessing:

Go in the name of Jesus, to follow the way of Jesus, to love with the love of Jesus,
and to be sustained by the peace of Jesus.

Amen