

Sunday 12th July 2020

Psalm 65. (1-8),9-13; Matthew 13.1-9,18-23

Call to worship

The Lord sows his seed among us, but do we let it root and grow? The Lord provides us with all we need, but what is the harvest? As we hear Christ's message: let us welcome it with joy, that it may take root within us and yield a rich and plentiful harvest.

MP 784 Ye Servants of God your Master Proclaim.

1 Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim, and publish abroad his wonderful name;
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
his kingdom is glorious and rules over all.

2 God rules in the height, almighty to save;
though hid from our sight, his presence we have;
the great congregation his triumph shall sing,
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

3 "Salvation to God, who sits on the throne!"
let all cry aloud, and honour the Son;
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
fall down on their faces and worship the Lamb.

4 Then let us adore and give him his right:
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,
all honour and blessing with angels above
and thanks never ceasing for infinite love.

Let's come together in Prayer.

The word of God is living and active. As God speaks his word to us today may we open our hearts to his message and the promise of life that it brings. God our creator, touch our faithfulness that God's message may not wither in us. Holy Spirit, our sustainer make us receptive to God's word and to the message of life it brings. We hear the Word of God but we do not always live our lives in harmony with it. God our Creator, touch our hearts and minds that we may live as you intended. Jesus our Life-giver, give us depth and faithfulness that God's message may be present in us. God, in your great goodness, speak to us your word of forgiveness and lead us into new and fruitful life with you. Let us praise God when the sun shines and the rain falls, let us praise God when life is full of joy and happiness, and in times of despair and sadness when the world seems a troubled place, and when signs of the kingdom break through: Let us praise God at the start of life through to its conclusion, as one generation gives way to another: Praise be to you for your constancy, from the dawn of creation to the end of time. Amen

Lord's Prayer

All ages talk

Have you ever lived on a farm? No? Have you ever planted a garden? Some of you may have planted a garden or watched your parents or grandparents plant a garden. There is a lot of work involved in the planting and caring for a garden. What are some of the things you will need to plant a garden? You'll need a spade to break up the ground and a rake to remove the rocks and keep the soil smooth. You need a hoe to get rid of the weeds that might try to take over your garden. You will probably need some fertilizer and, unless it rains a lot, you will need a hose to water your garden. Oh, I almost forgot the most important thing that you will need. Can you guess what it is? The seed! You can't have a garden without seeds. Now we have everything we need to produce a great crop of fruits and vegetables. Jesus liked to tell stories to help people understand his teaching. One day he told a story about a farmer who planted some seeds. As he scattered the seed in his field, some of them fell on the footpath and the birds ate them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground. The seeds sprouted, but they wilted and died under the hot sun because they didn't have deep roots. Some of the seeds fell in areas where there were a lot of weeds and the weeds choked out the young plants. Ah, but some of the seed fell on good, fertile soil and that seed grew and produced a wonderful crop. Do you think Jesus was really trying to teach people how to plant a garden? No. The story has a much deeper meaning. In Jesus' story, the seed represents the word of God and the soil represents the people who hear the word. Many times people hear the word of God, but they don't understand it. They don't take it in. That is like the seed on the footpath. The evil one comes and takes away the seed that has been planted in their heart before it has the opportunity to grow in their life. The seed that fell on rocky soil represents those who hear the word and receive it with great joy, but when the newness wears off and the excitement fades, they drift away because they don't have deep roots. The seed that fell among the weeds represents people who hear God's word and believe what it says, but soon the message is crowded out by the worries of life and the desire to get more stuff. If seed is planted in a bunch of weeds, the weeds will soon take over! A person who hears God's word and tries to understand what it says and put it into practice in their daily life is like good soil. In good soil the seed takes root and grows and produces a plentiful harvest. That is the kind of soil that Jesus wants us to be. What kind of soil are you?

Dear Jesus, we want to be like the good soil. Help us to listen to God's word and put it into practice in our daily life. Amen.

MP 23 All things bright and beautiful.

All things bright and beautiful,

All creatures great and small,

All things wise and wonderful,

The Lord God made them all.

1 Each little flower that opens,

Each little bird that sings,

He made their glowing colours,

He made their tiny wings. *Chorus*

2 The purple-headed mountain,

The river running by,

The sunset and the morning,
That brightens up the sky. *Chorus*

3 The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one. *Chorus*

4 He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
how great is God Almighty,
who has made all things well. *Chorus*

Reading Psalm 65 1 – 8

MP 732 We Plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land.

We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand;
He sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord
for all his love.*

2 He only is the Maker of all things near and far;
he paints the wayside flower, he lights the evening star;
the wind and waves obey him, by him the birds are fed;
much more to us, his children, he gives our daily bread. *Chorus*

3 We thank you, then, O Father, for all things bright and good,
the seed-time and the harvest, our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we to offer for all your love imparts;
we come now Lord to give you our humble, thankful hearts. *Chorus*

Reading Psalm 65 9 – 13

Intercession Prayer

Let us pray to God that we may welcome his word and respond to his call. We pray for those who spread the Word of God in our world, for church leaders, and teachers, that they may sow the good news with energy and joy. We pray for all communities, and especially for the people of God that we may not let the cares of the world choke the Word of God in us. We pray for those who have not yet seen and understood the Word of God, that they may be enlightened and recognise God's power in their lives. We pray for those who have remained deaf to the Word of God, that they may begin to hear and comprehend the Word of Life in all its fullness. We pray for the sick, the sad and the suffering, for doctors, nurses and for all who work for healing, that God's strength and power may be with them. Lord may your Word not return to you empty and may our prayers be heard by you in heaven. This we ask through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

MP 496 O for a thousand tongues to sing.

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!

2 Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

3 He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

4 He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

5 Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ:
ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
and leap, ye lame, for joy.

6 My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honours of your name

Sermon Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

I am sure you are all like me and love a good story, and they are often recalled quite easily, and enjoyed each time we remember the particular story we liked best. Jesus was an amazing storyteller, and knew the best way to making the people of his time know the ways that were expected of them the truth of the ways is through a story. Therefore, he told stories to explain to them what he was

thinking.

Today's gospel parable of the sower is one of the best known parables told by Jesus. So it is strange that the second half of today's reading Jesus gave such a deep explanation of the meaning of the parable. Usually he mostly left people to make their own connections, to draw their own truths from his words. But this time he made it very simple for them.

No doubt that through all our years in church past to present you will all have heard this story and numerous sermons on it! So can we still learn anything more from the parable? Can we look at it in some other way? We know the seed had to be hand sown, scattering it from side to side so that the seed fell as evenly as possible. But should the sower not have been a bit more careful. Do we even know who the sower was? I have always thought it was God or Jesus himself. Now though, we, the Christian church, are the sowers? How do we sow the seed, with God's word, do we do any sowing of seeds? How hard do we sow the seed, so that people can really hear it? And for it to be relevant for them today. Do we know how good our soil is? What do we do to keep the soil fresh and full of the nutrients needed to make sure the soil is full of goodness? Maybe the sower should have little more time over what was needed for the soil, more seed would have taken root. Should the parable be just pointed at individuals or should it be taken on board for churches and communities as well. I wonder if there are churches like the stony ground working hard to sow the seed and there's fast and vigorous uptake. But after a while it backs off. There's no depth to their teaching. They do not stay the course when times are hard. There is a leaning towards the good bits of the bible, forgetting that there are times when the hard learning has to be taken on board as that is when we really know the love of God beside us. And yes God is with us in the good bits too, but what is simple teaching does not last any length of time and there is not enough to keep satisfying anyone in faith for very long. Many have a skilful and keen answer to mission, but not enough within to help the seed grow, and the plant as it grows for a short while but dies as there is not enough moisture from within to stop it from drying out and withering. Then there are those who sprinkle a little seed on the path, and do not see the opportunities they have missed out on. They say things like: our church is alright, we like the way things are, or it's Aye been. We have asked people to our services, but in today's world it appears that they don't want to come. And we have not always followed up on the invites, this is a church where the seed is walked on. They do not want to change their comfortable way of worshipping. The seeds are just eaten by the birds.

What about the churches where the seed falls among thorns, which grow with it and choke it? The direct opposite of those who sprinkle seed on the path. They are very too concerned with being part of the real world. They tend to bend over backwards to be of the world. Their teaching is not clear or distinct. God, is very seldom spoken of, so as not to upset or put off some people. The edges are almost non-existent, no-one is sure, or even whether they exist at all. It offers very little to identify Christianity from the rest of life where anything goes.

And what about the churches which provide good soil, good solid feeding of the word. There are bits of the other churches in them as a whole. They open the doors for all who are willing, to hear the word. To be encouraging to bring them a maturing faith. A faith which isn't afraid of the difficult questions, and to lead them to the true life of living in God. They are willing and ready to change to assist with the needs of the people but they will not give up on the true Christian way as it is a solid necessity for the seed to grow.

This type of church does not stop anyone from being within its walls and there will be the thorns within. But they will not let the thorns choke the seeds but let them grow alongside. It is known that Christians must be part of the world. Not taken out from it. But it is also known that the Christian life of the church will not be watered down to the way of the world standards. And are not afraid to recognise and tell people about the place God has in their lives. What sort of soil does our church offer? How we should upkeep the richness of our soil? How can we nurture the seedlings? What sort of sowers are we? The parable of the sower is a story. It's a story which has a beginning and a middle. But it's up to us to decide how that story should continue. It's up to us to determine the next chapter. So I want to leave you with a question. Where do we go from here? Amen.

MP 743 We'll walk the Land with hearts on fire.

1 We'll walk the land With hearts on fire;
and every step will be a prayer.
Hope is rising New day dawning;
sound of singing fills the air.

2 Two thousand years, and still the flame
Is burning bright across the land.
Hearts are waiting longing, aching,
for awakening once again.
*Let the flame burn brighter
in the heart of the darkness,
Turning night to glorious day.
Let the song grow louder,
as our love grows stronger;
Let it shine! let it shine!*

3 We'll walk for truth Speak out for love;
In Jesus' name We shall be strong,
to lift the fallen, to save the children,
to fill the nation with Your song. *Chorus*

Benediction

May God's living be sown within your soul. May his life fill you with goodness and his love bear fruit in you and those you meet. And may you know fulfilment of the life-giving Christ today and always.
Amen