

Traditional Home service Sunday 12th July Trinity 5

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Lord God, our maker and our redeemer, this is your world and we are your people: come among us and save us. We have wilfully misused your gifts of creation; Lord, be merciful: **forgive us our sin.** We have seen the ill-treatment of others and have not gone to their aid; Lord, be merciful: **forgive us our sin.** We have condoned evil and dishonesty and failed to strive for justice; Lord, be merciful: **forgive us our sin.** We have not loved you with all our heart, nor our neighbours as ourselves; Lord, be merciful: **forgive us our sin.**

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*see page 2*)

READINGS - Isaiah 55:10-13
Romans 8:1-11
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

TALK (*see page 3*)

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*see page 2*)

CONCLUSION

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

21 Charles Wesley.

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, shouldst 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 inquire 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.

O JESUS, I HAVE PROMISED

To serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide.

O let me feel Thee near me;
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But Jesus, draw Thou nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear Thee speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
To hasten, or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
Thou Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised
To all who follow Thee
That where Thou art in glory
There shall Thy servants be;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow
My Master and my Friend.

O let me see Thy footmarks,
And in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
Is in Thy strength alone.
O guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then in heaven receive me,
My Saviour and my Friend.

Sermon notes - 12th July
Adrian Morton

Matthew 13,1-9 18-23 Romans 8,1-11
Parable of the Sower

The parable of the sower has given me much encouragement over the years.

One of the joys of being a church leader is seeing lives transformed by the grace of God.

One of the disappointments of being a church leader is seeing people fall away, or seeing established Christians giving up on fellowship, and losing passion for Jesus and kingdom life.

And this parable speaks into this; it reveals a kingdom reality about how people receive the word of God.

So let's get into it...

The first scenario...

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

The explanation given by Jesus:

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

The key to this scenario is in the word 'understand'.

When anyone hears the message... and does not understand.

Or doesn't comprehend, or have insight into...

Now we might think that is a bit harsh. Simply not understanding something.

But this isn't about an intellectual understanding.

This refers to someone who hears the word, the message of the kingdom, but doesn't bring it into their experience.

When the message remains a concept and is not taken into practical experience, then the seed remains in the open and it becomes vulnerable to theft.

By the enemy, demonic spirits.

We kind of know don't we that people learn best by doing rather than simply hearing...

If someone tells me how to remove the rear wheel of my motorbike.
I could then say I know how to do it.

But I won't really know how to do it, until I've done it, until I've put it into practice.

e.g. suppose when we reopen after lockdown we have a visiting preacher who comes and preaches an amazing sermon on 'Generosity'...

Our hearts get touched by God and we all go yeh!

So we respond to the word and we receive it into our hearts,

But if we do nothing practical about it. If we don't walk it out in our lives. That seed word gets raised to the surface and can get stolen away.

Interestingly it says the evil one comes and snatches what was sown in his heart.

So the message remains in our minds.

And whenever we hear again the message about Generosity we'll agree with it.

"Yes that's right, I've heard that before, the church needs to be generous..."

But the power of that word has been removed from the centre of who I am. And has therefore lost the power to change who I am.

But suppose after hearing the talk about generosity... the following week we decide to gift someone an amount of money, or a cake, or whatever...

What happens then...

Is that seed, that word about generosity, gets pushed firmly down into your inner being and out of the reach of the enemy.

You then have the seed of God about Generosity deeply embedded in you.

And it becomes part of your life.

We need to walk the walk of being a Christian and not just talk the talk to coin a modern phrase...

So the first scenario is the person who keeps the message as a concept, a theory, but doesn't do anything about it.

The second scenario....

Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

The explanation:

The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

The issue here is the person with no root. I believe this is referring to a person who hasn't the character to retain the word.

It says when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

There is a spiritual principle going on here...

When we receive the word of God. When we accept the call to be part of God's people, a son or daughter of the king, a friend of God...

We are also signing up to a cause. To work to bring the kingdom of God to bear on earth.

And what we are doing is saying to God, Refine me for this! Come and develop my character to accompany that word...

We need character to stand against and defeat the enemies schemes.

It may be you have a specific call to be a pastor, a worship leader, a youth or children's worker, an evangelist, to work with the poor, to be a Christian in business... whatever it is...

We are inviting God.. Refine me for that! Come and develop my character... so I can be fruitful in what you have called me to be...

<Talk about BT Christian union...>

I know If I'm going to follow the call of Jesus to love my enemies, my character is still, actually, in need of some refinement.

So in that way the word, the message of the kingdom, attracts 'trouble'.

And it may feel like the Lord is testing you. It may feel unpleasant!

But actually what He is doing is developing character in you.

Because we need character to be fruitful.

The third scenario...

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

The explanation:

The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

The Coronavirus situation has meant that much of what the world is offering is being shaken.

The seemingly strong foundations of our economy, job security, our health system are not as strong as we thought...

What many may have relied on to give us Hope for the future is being challenged.

And I understand that many people will have uncertain job worries which will inevitably bring a level of anxiety.

But God's word hasn't changed.
He is still who He is.

The Kingdom is still advancing...
Our future is still secure in Him.

His word still says, Seek first the Kingdom then all these things (worries of life) will essentially be sorted by Him.

This is a time to cling to Him more firmly rather than let ourselves be further distracted by what the world seemingly offers.

The final scenario...

Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop— a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

The explanation:

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Jesus arrives at the grand finale of the parable.

This is where it has been heading.

It has been the same sower and the same quality of seed throughout.

Now though the soil is good.

This is the person who both hears and understands.

The one who puts the word into practice.

The one who allows the Lord to develop his or her character.

The one who doesn't get distracted by the world.

The call on our lives is to be fruitful.

That is what we have been destined for.

In John's Gospel (15:8) Jesus says, *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

The level of fruitfulness is not really a concern.

Whether it was 100, 60 or 30 didn't concern Jesus.

Fruitfulness comes with life in the Spirit, which the Romans reading touched on.

A life of no condemnation.

Abiding in Jesus...

CONCLUSION

The people who first heard Jesus tell this parable would have gone away asking themselves, what kind of soil am I?

What kind of soil do I want to be...

As we start to come out of lockdown, albeit slowly...

With many of our old routines having been messed up.

With probably some new habits developed over the last 3 months...

Maybe for some of us, church life, kingdom life just seems hard to think about... to engage with again...

So these questions, what kind of soil am I?
What kind of soil do I want to be...

These are timely questions...

They are still good questions to ask ourselves.

Amen.