



Stanground Baptist Church – Sunday 27th September 2020

Harvest Celebration

Matthew 13 v 1-9 - The Parable of the sower

Today give thanks (as we should every day) for all the gifts that God gives us each day, with the focus being on food today.

I have chosen the parable of the sower, a traditional harvest service reading, as it reminds us of all the work that goes in to growing the food that we eat. It is very easy these days for many of us, especially those of us who grew up in towns, to forget how much work is needed to get the food to our tables. It's not just the case of going to the supermarket, picking up the items you want, paying for them and then eating them at home (cooking them 1st if required of course), or shopping on line. Someone had to grow the food, from a seed to the full grown plant, or raise the animals or catch the fish etc. Then get it ready to be sold to us.

So today we celebrate all the hard work of the farmers, fishermen and all involved in getting the food to our table. Most of us are able to enjoy as much food as we like, sometimes too much (especially if its chocolate!!), but we also need to remember that there are many people throughout the world, this country and our city who do not have enough to eat, even for one meal a day. Which is where charities like foodbank come in to provide for those in need. Today we would usually be at church and bring our gifts to the front and then these would be taken to Foodbank Peterborough during the week. Our gifts along with all the other gifts would then be given to those in need in our city. As mentioned in the notice sheet, please see different ways this year we can help our local foodbank.

Think about how different things were in the time of Jesus, some 2000 years ago, there weren't any supper markets, freezers, ability to have food from other countries. Basically people survived on what they could grow or raise, and what they could afford to buy in the local area. Here in Matthews Gospel we have Jesus using a parable, a story with a meaning but in a language that the hearers of the day could understand, using an image that everyone would have seen. They would have seen farmers working the land, they would have seen how farmers sowing seeds, not as they do today with machines to help get an even spread of seed, no it was grab a handful of seed and throw it out as the farmer walked along his field. Most of the seed would end up where the farmer wanted it to, in the field with the ground that he had prepared, but some would fall by the way side, on the paths or in the bushes. These seeds would either be eaten by other animals, or trodden in to the ground. If any did take root they would have not grown properly and therefore be no good to the farmer for his own use or to sell.

This is a well-known parable and Jesus goes on to explain why he uses parables to get his message across to those listening, including the disciples. To get the message of hope, love and peace across Jesus needed to use language that could be understood by those listening. Today this is the same, we as preachers try and look at the scriptures and then put them into everyday language or use everyday examples to help all of understand the message that is in the passage.



The classic question is 'where is our seed of God's Holy Spirit in relation to this parable today?'

Are we in the good soil, being fed and watered by God, being used by God to spread his love?

Are we in the thorn bushes as the side of the field, feeling that the pressure of life is getting too much for us and that God is not helping us? This is like the seeds that in the thorn bushes.

Or do we feel that at the moment, God is very far away from us and that we are unable to hear him and therefore we are like the seeds on the path, that can't get any nourishment.

Whichever type of seed you feel you are at the moment, give thanks to God that you know his seed of the Holy Spirit is in you and pray for greater wisdom in your understanding of how to respond to the Holy Spirit and maybe over time your seed will move to the good soil and once it is there start to grow even stronger.

But how has this got to do with us and harvest, well we may not all be able to grow our own food but we can all show God's love to those around us by being our best selves. At Harvest time, as well as other times throughout the year, we focus on how blessed we are in the provisions that God has for us and how we can use them. We also remember how many people do not have as many blessings as we have. We remember that there are many people as I said earlier, that need our help because circumstances have given them a different life.

Today at Harvest, we are supporting our local food bank here in Peterborough, which helps those in need in our city. The people in need are not only those who chose to be on the streets, there are those families whose lives have been turned upside down either through health issues, unemployment, or similar reasons. This harvest there will many more people in need in our city due to the Covid 19 virus, as it affects all of us. So let us think about how we help those in need around us, either through our giving to foodbank or other charities in the area. Also let us think about how we can practically help our neighbours either through saying hello, offering to help them in any way we can. If we can offer help to those around us or at least speak to them, we are showing God's love and blessing to them.

Remember that when God created the earth, he provided for all we needed. He still does this today. Jesus when he was on earth told us that we will always have those in need with us. In Psalm 107 verse 9 we are reminded 'for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things'.

On this harvest Sunday, let us give thanks for all the blessings he has given us and all the gifts that we can share with those around us.

AMEN