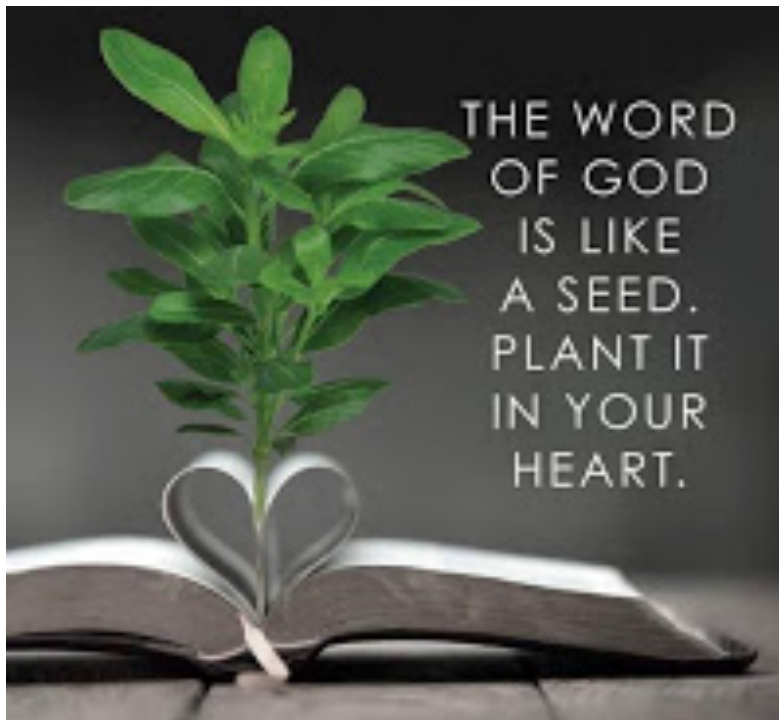


Barthol Chapel and Tarves Joint Worship Sunday 12 July 2020 9.45 for 10.00



"The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams." St Matthew 13:23

Introduction

Over recent weeks Alison has encouraged us to set apart a special space where we might spend time with God, both on Sunday mornings either on Zoom or with the written worship materials from the web-site, and during the week. She has suggested various activities linking to this space each week.

This week you might wish to find something that represents growth - perhaps a picture, a flower or a seed. Consider what more you might do to nurture God's Word in your heart and what harvest that could produce.

Call to Worship

Leader: We gather this morning in community

All: To worship together

Leader: We gather this morning in love

All: To pray together

Leader: We gather this morning with open hearts

All: To listen and learn together

Leader: We gather this morning in praise

All: To sing together

Praise CH4 727: In the bulb there is a flower

1.

In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

2

There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody.
There's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future,
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

3

In our end is our beginning;
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing;
in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

Prayer of Approach

Lord's Prayer (You might like to unmute yourself for this)

The Word of God - Isaiah 55: 10-13

The rain and the snow
come down from the sky.

They do not return to it
without watering the earth.

They make plants come up and grow.

The plants produce seeds for farmers.

They also produce food for people to eat.

¹¹ The words I speak are like that.

They will not return to me without producing results.

They will accomplish what I want them to.

They will do exactly what I sent them to do.

¹² "My people, you will go out of Babylon with joy.

You will be led out of it in peace.

The mountains and hills

will burst into song as you go.

And all the trees in the fields

will clap their hands.

¹³ Juniper trees will grow where there used to be bushes that had thorns on them.

And myrtle trees will grow where there used to be thorns.

That will bring me great fame.

It will be a lasting reminder of what I can do.

It will stand forever."

Meditation from Spill the Beans resources

How awful!	the story of God's unconditional welcome,
How obscenely extravagant!	who want to maintain standards
How indiscriminate of God	and conditions
to throw open the gates of the kingdom	and limit the sphere
so that anyone might find a way in.	of the impossible kingdom of God.
No standards.	Thankfully, the God of the Universe
No safeguards.	knows no bounds
But a generosity	and cannot be subdued
that is sure to be abused	but carries on regardless,
and just as scandalous today	sowing and reaping,
as was this message	shuffling and shoogling,
to those who listened to Jesus.	making space for all,
Still there are those	throwing wide the doors
who do not want to believe,	and gathering us in.
who want to rewrite	

Music: 'The heart of worship' by Matt Redman

(You can find this on YouTube)

Reflection

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the rain and snow - "They do not return to the sky without watering the earth. The words I speak are like that. They will not return to me without producing results. They will accomplish what I want them to. They will do exactly what I sent them to do."

The theme today is one of sowing and reaping. One of the other set texts is the Parable of the sower. It is very familiar to us and on the surface may seem very innocuous. A rural idyll. Picture the scene – the ploughed field, a smiling farmer sowing the seed with joyful abandon. But this parable is very controversial.

The method of sowing at the time was 'Broadcasting' – the term is self explanatory. God sows seed on all soils and Heaven is open to everyone. The meditation from 'Spill the Beans' shows us that folk were probably scandalised by Jesus' explanation. Indiscriminate sowing! Surely not every nation is welcome in Heaven. Imagine God throwing the seed universally (without our involvement). That would cause no little grinding of teeth amongst some of Jesus' listeners.

As it does for some today who might agree that not all are welcome.

It's all a bit random – no marketing strategy. Throwing the seed out all over the place. Some might grow, some might not and where's the market research?

Not targeted at all. Not even economical. Even when it does grow we can't see it because it happens out of sight. The signs of the growth of the Kingdom are not easy to spot. Germination needs the right conditions for growth.

How does that translate as far as the Kingdom is concerned?

We get a bit obsessed with creating new programmes; bigger and better worship; plans and projects. What is at the 'heart of Worship'? As Matt Redman says, 'It's all about You Jesus'.

The reality is that all these different conditions exist.

Love is sown into all of them, not by us, but by the sower.

Every condition is a possible growing place. Each is given as much chance as any other. Indeed, when Jesus explains the parable, he doesn't explain the sower, he explains the soil. The seed falls on different grounds regardless. Perhaps we should target our limited resources to those areas that will bring the biggest impact or return.

We could carry out cost/benefit analyses to aid our decision making.

But, no, this is not how it is done in the Realm of Love. The Good News is given and offered. It is invited to grow. No matter the condition you are in; no matter the condition the culture is in; or the land is in or indeed the church is in.

It's universally given and generously offered by the divine sower. Once the seed is sown we are required to wait. It's like Advent ... the coming of the Kingdom. The process requires love and care and patience but is hopeful.

The responsibility is for us to sow. We are not responsible for the growth. There is an invitation to extravagant, time-consuming action, using an almost hit and miss approach. That relies on obedience. We are not to worry about the result - the success of our sowing is not our concern, but that of God.

In New York City, at the corner of 42nd Street and 2nd Avenue, there is a billboard that has a message that may apply: "If your cup runneth over, spill a little".

Is that true? We have so many ways in which we can demonstrate that we have heard the promise of God to change our lives. We can engage with the task of sowing that word of hope and life and love which we have received. The task of sharing it day by day in ordinary daily living. We have no idea where it might lead, or what might be achieved - or whether it may fail. Even so we all can be part of the enterprise of hope.

Evangelism relies on the message being proclaimed, in a variety of forms and methods according to our gift and opportunities. The transforming power of the Gospel is that of God. It is not reliant on our abilities or qualities; it does not rely on our efficiency or persuasiveness.

We take the message.

Then it is over to God and the individual who receives it.

They then respond and engage, or reject its power.

This might feel strange in our culture of 'success' and attention to profit margins.

Instead, it calls the Church (in other words us) to be faithful about our mission.

Not be concerned with what might or might not be seen as success.

The Word grows in fertile soil. The promise of God, as the prophet Isaiah affirms, is sure: "It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."

I conclude with words from the Meditation:

"Thankfully, the God of the Universe

knows no bounds

and cannot be subdued

but carries on regardless,

sowing and reaping,

shuffling and shoogling,

making space for all,

throwing wide the doors

and gathering us in."

Prayers for Others

Here are some suggestions for personal prayer.

Pray:

- that folk will treat one another with love as lock-down eases
- that God will help you to plant the seed in your heart
- for guidance about what you can do to spread the Word
- for those who are anxious at this time
- for Alison and the session as they seek to find the way forward

Praise CH4 804: You shall go out with joy

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy and the trees of the field
shall clap, shall clap their hands
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and you'll go out with joy.

Blessing

NOTICES

Next Sunday 9.45am Joint Worship (Service commences 10.00am)

If you would like to be added to the e-mail list for the link to Sunday's live worship gathering on zoom or join in on your landline please contact

Rob: e-mail sessionclerk@bartholchapel.org or

Susanna: Tel 851345 or e-mail smbichard@aol.com.

Pastoral Matters

The Minister is available to deal with urgent pastoral matters Tel 851295

Care for the Community if you are aware of anyone in Tarves who needs help of any kind please contact Ruth 851887

Tuesday 11.00am Tarves Session Coffee Morning hosted

Tuesday 21 July at 7pm Formal Session meeting on Zoom