

# Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## The paper-version Service

**The church is meeting on paper, online and on Sunday at 9.30am in the Building**

All of our services are online [www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk](http://www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk) but this weekly sheet captures our Sunday service for those without internet.

**To Begin:** Find a Bible. If safe, perhaps light a candle. Find a comfortable place and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the modern song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



**Opening Prayer:** Father God, thank you, that you come to us in Jesus and are revealed in your Word, the Bible. Help us be those who hear and respond to you today. Forgive us for the times we fail to hear and help us receive your forgiveness. Send your Spirit to strengthen us, equip us for work in your harvest field today. **Amen**

### **Song:**

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands  
have made  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling  
thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe  
displayed

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to  
Thee*

*How great Thou art, how great Thou  
art*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to  
Thee*

*How great Thou art, how great Thou  
art*

And when I think of God, His Son not  
sparing  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in  
That on the Cross, my burden gladly  
bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin

*Then sings my soul...*

When Christ shall come with shout of  
acclamation

And lead me home, what joy shall fill  
my heart

Then I shall bow with humble  
adoration

And then proclaim, my God, how  
great Thou art.

*Then sings my soul...*

**Read:** Luke 6:17-36

***How do we make it?*** (A summary of the talk given by David Bush).

I have a wonderful little book on my bookshelf called “Bit part players of the Bible”, which foregrounds some of the biblical characters who often appear in supporting roles. My mind went to that book as I read the Luke story and prepared my talk.

Why? Well I saw bit part players in the passage – certainly in the first 3 verses – which give us a tantalisingly small insight into the role women played in Jesus ministry and the lives of him and the disciples – I would so much like to know more about that! The other bit part player, ironically you might think given the title of the reading – is the Sower!

While we might call this the parable OF the sower, it really isn't a parable ABOUT the sower. This reading is traditional for the church at Harvest time (although we are actually going to celebrate harvest next week) and the theme for today is how we can be good sowers of the seed.

It is my belief that we must always exercise a degree of caution when we talk about ‘what the bible says about ... [some topic]’ if we start reading a passage in some way other than Jesus preached it – if we give it a meaning that it didn't mean in its own time – if we create allegory and interpretation that the original context didn't



contain. To my mind this isn't primarily a parable about the sower, but about the seed – it isn't about the person or people who sow the seed, but about those who hear it, and whether or not they respond.

So a challenge today is that I don't see PRIMARILY in this passage that Jesus is directly aiming his simile of the seed at his disciples to aid them in their teaching – and if it wasn't there then, we need to be cautious about inferring from it today – so it is a challenge to us if we wish to look at our role as sowers of the seed in our day drawing on this passage.

The essence of the parable is that there are four ways people hear and respond to Jesus teaching, and the key lesson is that one of these ways generates the abundant growth that Jesus desires. Now very neatly, I think, and possibly not coincidence, four ways of learning and responding have a long history in Jewish rabbinic teaching – and could very well have provided the framework or even inspiration for the parable Jesus told here.

So I do feel justified in extending the application in this way – in that the sowers themselves must first be hearers and appliers.

Now as Jesus used parables to generate relevance, freshness, interest and deeper reflection for those who listened, I hope you will allow me to take the liberty of drawing on the Jewish tradition of the four types of learners to create a modern day parable about these four ways that might help us reflect on our own learning to help us learn ABOUT being sower.

I put myself at pains to point out – this is NOT what the Bible says – but maybe what I think it would say if it were applied to us as disciples called to learn and to be productive in mission with what we have learned! And each of us, as you will hear, must extract the relevant and truthful nuggets from it for ourselves to go and apply it.

### **The parable of the Facebook teacher**

A Christian teacher had recorded a teaching on Facebook, and this was being transmitted to his local church.

On one front drive a man cleaning his car as he listened received the words like a sponge. Listening and hearing the words as they were spoken, allowing them to fill him up. But at the end of the talk, that was where the words stayed, soaked up inside the man and never being put to

productive use to feed the churches mission.

In his garage, readying his lawnmower another man received the words like a funnel, openly and hungrily he heard the words, taking them in, but over the next few hours and days the words and their meaning for him drained slowly out, leaving nothing there to put to use to feed the churches mission.

Holed up in his shed, making cider a third man received the words like a muslin cloth, allowing the words in, and processing them, but collecting and keeping in the filter only the rubbish – the wrong lessons, the unwanted parts, the mistakes and errors, while the good juice ran out and away. With the rubbish, the error, he collected the man went out to try to be productive in the mission of the church but did more harm than good.

But in a kitchen, a fourth man received the words like a colander, allowing all the words he was hearing in. Collecting the truths, the value and the relevant inside the colander and allowing the unwanted and unnecessary and erroneous parts to flow out the bottom as waste. With what he collected he was able to go out, and put the learning to good use, contributing greatly to the churches mission and bearing great fruit. What happens within you when you read the Bible, listen to a sermon, or hear a Christian talk?

**Prayers:** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

- Pray for this day, and the coming week
- Pray for the nations, their leaders, and peoples pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends
- Pray for the Church



**Collect for 16<sup>th</sup> after Trinity:** O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers of your people who call upon you; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**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.**

**Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation.** The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV)

**The Notices:** If you know of others who'd like to receive this, or you'd rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

**Church Services:** Sunday 9.30am with safety measures in place.

**APCM:** Our annual meeting will be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October, we are hoping to meet in the building with online access. We will be electing new churchwardens, Deanery Synod Reps and PCC members. Please be praying for those God is calling – perhaps yourself!

If you are not sure whether you're on our **Electoral Roll**, please contact Matt.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers