

Church Family Worship at Home

12th July 2020

Service Theme: Parable of the Sower



Welcome

Preparation

Take a moment to be still and place yourself in God's hands.
Remember those who also will be worshipping with us and even though we cannot see them, we hold them to God.

As we gather together Lord, help us to concentrate on you.
As we put aside the things that distract us Lord, help us to concentrate on you.
As we leave behind the things that worry us Lord, help us to concentrate on you.
As we forget about ourselves Lord, help us to concentrate on you.
As we worship you with songs of praise Lord, help us to concentrate on you.
As we listen to stories from your Word Lord, help us to concentrate on you.
As we hear your teaching Lord, help us to concentrate on you.

**O Lord, open our lips.
And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Opening Prayer

Faithful God,
let your word be the treasure of our hearts,
that we may delight in your truth
and walk in your ways
through Jesus Christ your Son
Amen.

Saying Sorry

Gracious God,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
Lord, have mercy.

For going our own way
and ignoring your will for our lives,
Christ have mercy.

For being distracted by temptations
and the tempting sights and sounds,
Lord have mercy.

May the God of love
forgive us our sins
and bring us to everlasting life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Saying sorry – Children



Lord Jesus,
for the times when we are
stubborn
and do not listen to you;
for the times
when we want to write our own
story;
for the times when we are not
interested
in other people's stories:
Forgive us, Lord,
and help us to learn from you.
Amen.

Prayer for the Day

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
that 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.



Reading – Romans 8:1-11

Life Through the Spirit

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Reading: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear."

¹⁸ “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Children: You might like to watch this video that tells the Parable of the Sower
<https://youtu.be/Tb7bvF5Ucrk>



Short Reflection by Revd Lis Arnold **(Audio file recorded by Lis)**

For children: While listening to this, why not do the colouring sheet that is provided with the children's sheets.

The Parable of the Sower

The sower in Jesus' parable clearly hadn't been watching "Gardener's World" and following the instructions of Monty Don. Where was the careful soil preparation or the tidy rows of planted seeds, or the control and selection of early growth?

Of course they were nowhere to be seen because, as we know full well, that's not the point of the parable. It is not a gardening lesson, it's about the "Word of the Kingdom", how it is spread and how and where it is received, and by whom.

In our generation the word has been heard at home, in church, at school. It has been taught. I say "in our generation" and by that I mean those of us who have been brought up in Christian homes, or attended church from an early age. We have been exposed to the teachings of the Bible, the stories of Jesus, the teachings of the church.

But there are great swathes of society now who are ignorant of all this. The Christian festivals which punctuate the year are secular festivals to many. Funnily enough, reverting to the pagan festivals which the early Christians rebranded!

The word can be spread overtly or informally. we can use schemes like Alpha and Emmaus to invite people to explore the faith. We can have welcoming services, such as our Carols at Christmas – which packed our churches last year. but do such events sow the seed of faith?

Family life events in church are another opportunity to show the love and welcome of God – but do they sow the seed of faith?

The way we live our lives – does that sow a seed of faith in others?

The answer is we don't know. It is all really in the hands of the Holy Spirit. We can only do our best, the rest is up to God. God's generosity is for all, we do not own it or control it, we only have a part to play – which begs the question: where are we in this parable?

I expect we have already cast ourselves in the role of a sower and to an extent that is true. "Go out and make disciples of all the nations," Jesus says and as disciples and apostles that is our mission. Sowers we are then. but in the parable the soil plays a part too.

What sort of soil have we been? What sort of soil have I been? Like St Paul we don't always do what we know we should do. Sometimes our soil is rich and the roots go very deep and bear lovely fruit but on another day when we are overcome with worry or distractions the seed rolls off and we are left weedy and struggling or deflected by life events. So to keep our soil, our soul faithful, we need to pray for God's grace to keep us healthy and loving, so that we bear fruit that is pleasing to God.

In this lockdown time the internet has played a valuable part in being a Sower. Many churches have live streamed services and videos. Thousands of people have watched from the comfort of their sofas, in their pyjamas, drinking coffee and may have caught a seed of faith. The internet has made the Word accessible to millions – a captive audience in fact. A modern parable of the Sower!

Children's Reflection on the Matthew Reading

This reflection provides opportunities to reflect on or talk together about the Matthew reading. (An audio recording from Teresa is available).

And/or you could do the Family Time Sheet together (separate sheet).

Words in italics are questions to help with the discussion.

What do you remember from today's reading?

Jesus tells a story or parable about someone planting seeds in a field. He does not carefully place the seeds in the ground but scatters them around. The seeds all land in different places, some in good soil and some not. *Can you remember all the places the seed lands and what happens to it?*

We have a link with **Katikamu Sebamala** Primary School in Uganda, we know that as households, communities they grow many more crops for themselves.

All the children who live in this rural part of Uganda know just how important it is to take care of their seeds. To make the ground ready, to make sure they have all that they need to grow. *What do seeds need to grow? (Earth, water, light, food)*

Some children plant seeds to grow food to eat. *What other kinds of plants might grow from seeds? (Flowers, trees)* Some children plant trees to help protect the forests. *How do trees and forests help us?*

That's right – trees give us wood and paper. They are homes for the animals and the birds. And they help to keep the air that we breathe clean.

In today's gospel reading which is all about planting seeds, Jesus goes on to explain his parable and exactly what it means. *Can you remember any of what he said?*

The seed that falls on the path is like those people who hear what Jesus is saying but don't really understand it or listen to it properly.

The seed that falls on the rocks is like the person who hears what Jesus asks of us and starts off really excited about it, but who gives up following him as soon as it is difficult.

The seed that falls in the thorns is like someone who hears what Jesus says but concentrates too much on having the best things, the most money, rather than on being the person Jesus wants us to be.

The seed that falls on the rich soil is like someone who hears what Jesus is asking, understands it, and lives their life as he asks them to.

So which one do you think we should try to be? How do you think you can be like the seed that falls on the rich soil? How do you listen to what Jesus is saying to you?

How does Jesus ask us to live our lives and treat one another? What can you do to follow him?

This week, see if you can be like the seed that falls on the rich soil – listen to what Jesus asks of you, try to understand it and live your life as God calls you to.

Adapted from Cafod resources



Family Song – Our God is a great big God <https://youtu.be/H591VkWAFps>

You may want to play this to sing together at home – it isn't about a sower but it is about how great God is and always a good thing to sing about!

Intercessory Prayer

We try to listen to Jesus as we pray together:

We pray for world leaders: that they may do what is best for all their people, especially those who are poor.

We pray for all people that grow crops to feed themselves and to feed others: that they may have a good harvest.

We pray for our partnership of Churches here in West Swindon, family and friends: that we may be like the seed in the rich soil, listening to Jesus and caring for one another.

Amen

Adapted from Cafod resources

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: We have a gospel to proclaim

https://youtu.be/_ozcqFS3qlo



1

We have a gospel to proclaim,
good new for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

2

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem
not in a royal house or hall
but in a stable dark and dim,
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

3

Tell of his death at Calvary,
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross;
for all he loved his life he gave.

4

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.

5

Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on his church
to live for him, the Lamb who died.

6

Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

William Gardiner (1770-1853)

Closing Prayer

Hear the teaching of Jesus:
'Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it.'
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.

Dismissal

**Be in the peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.**

God bless you now and always

