

## 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020 6pm The Sower and the Seed *Transcript only of reading and talk*

Service led by Gill Palmer, sermon by Lynda Howells

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### ***Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23 [NIVUK 1984] The Parable of the Sower***

[Charlie Palmer:]

<sup>1</sup> That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup> Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup> Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears, let him hear."

<sup>18</sup> "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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."

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### ***Sermon***

[Gill Palmer:]

And now over to Lynda, who is going to bring us the word.

[Lynda Howells:]

Please, Father God, open our ears for us to hear what you want to say to us.  
Amen.

How are you feeling today? Happy, sad, worried or confused? What on earth is happening to our world? Where will it all end?

Our world seems so much smaller now. News travels much quicker with the internet and modern communications. We know what's happening almost immediately, before it happens! Is this good or bad? And how do we deal with it?

At the moment we are seeing and hearing constantly of the havoc the pandemic is causing, both here and abroad. The loss of life, the illness, the devastation caused to so many who have lost their jobs. The security of life as they know it, stripped away. And I confess that there are times when I'm discouraged. And I find myself worrying about the future, especially for those I love, and for all who are really struggling. Then what?

So, in the parable of the sower, Jesus tells how the farmer sows seed in his field. The seeds have different experiences, according to where they fall. Some seeds fell along the path and was eaten by the birds. Some fell on rocks, where it grew for a while, and then it died. Some fell among thorns: that had no chance - nowhere to grow. Some fell on good soil and produced a wonderful harvest.

Jesus went on to explain to His disciples what He meant through the words of the parable of the sower. And He explained that it was about preaching of the Gospel. The Good News is told the people, and this message of hope is for everyone.

The seed which fell on the path represents those who heard the message about God's kingdom, but their hearts are hardened and they don't want to know. And they're not even willing to try and understand. They're simply not interested. So the pressures, enticements of the world win.

Those who receive the seed which falls in rocky places is like seed which falls under a bit of soil in the rocks. It springs up, but because the root has nowhere to go through the rocks, the hot sun comes and withers it, and it dies. This refers to a pool of people who make spur-of-the-moment, emotional decisions to follow Jesus without any real personal commitment or cost. And the minute there is a spiritual problem in their lives, this sense of searching for the next emotional pickup.

The one who receives the seeds which falls among the thorns represents those who are attracted to Jesus. But the worries of this world - and especially at the moment with the virus and all its implications - and the lure of worldliness, money and greed, and all the other material and worldly temptations on offer, choke the seed and the Word of God dies in their hearts.

But the one who receives the seed which falls on good ground hears it and understands it, and is obedient to the calling of Jesus, and produces a crop yielding much more than that which was sown.

So think for a moment about grass seed: you sow it. You water it. You wait for a while, and then suddenly the ground starts to turn green. The seed has taken root. And through care and watering it grows. And all this comes from spreading some dry uninteresting-looking grass seed. Our lives can take this pattern at times: we read God's Word, the grass seed. And at times perhaps we struggle to believe what He's telling us and promising us through His Word. But it is then that we need to water that Word through prayer and our quiet times with our Heavenly Father. And as we give ourselves to the reading of God's Holy Word, really believing that it is true, and possible, then gradually we are changed, we are strengthened. And we are enabled to help our Father God in producing a harvest and growing His Kingdom.

As I said earlier, our world is in such a mess. But we who profess to know and love God have an amazing opportunity to speak of the hope, the assurances, the promises we have through knowing Jesus. And we need to pray for opportunities to share this Good News in a gentle and loving way.

And we're also called to take responsibility to pray for our government. Setting politics aside, we need to pray for all our leaders. that they would be led by our Father God, and be obedient to His teaching for the benefit of all, and most importantly at this time to have wisdom and the humility to listen to those who have the knowledge within the fields of science and medicine, to guide them as to the way forward to come through this coronavirus.

Prayer changes situations. And if we want to be part of helping God's will flourish and grow for the good of all, and each one of us has the capability and the opportunity to be part of that growth and that change to our commitment to prayer. I read a while ago that prayer takes the situation out of our hands and puts it into God's hands. Do you believe this?

Sister Wendy Beckett said, "Prayer is God taking possession of us." Do you want God to take possession of you?

Amen.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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