

Matthew 13:1-9; Isaiah 55.10-13; Romans 8.1-11  
8 & 10 am (All-Age Parish Communion)  
St. Andrew's Totteridge: Sunday 16th July 2017: Trinity 5

*In the power of the Holy Spirit, may God bless the voice that speaks and the ears that hear, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

“You always reap according to what you sow.” This is the simple version of what is actually a rather more complicated business. For those of us who are interested in gardening it's common knowledge that you reap your harvest according to how much you prepare the ground, what kind of things you hope to grow in that ground, how you sow the seeds (deep, shallow etc.), how much you water, care for, and protect your vulnerable little seedlings when first they begin to show.

And even then, some of your seeds won't make it, some get blown away, some eaten by predators, some choked by weeds, and some just won't even begin to sprout, no matter how much you care for them.

The same rules apply for anything that has life, anything that carries that divine spark, whether it's a plant, a puppy, a duck-billed platypus or a human person. It's a mystery why some make it and some don't, but everything that lives is holy, and requires our nurture to stand a chance of coming to fruition.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus likens the people, not to the seeds, but to the soil. The seeds are more akin to the word of God, which Isaiah mentions, achieving that which God intends, however much we obstruct or nurture. We, the human family, represent how well our parents, teachers and carers loved and provided for us, or in their absence, how much effort we put in to preparing ourselves. It is our

thoughtfulness, behaviour and actions that dictate how effectively we pass on whatever gifts we've been given. St. Teresa of Avila knew how it works when she prayed:

*Lord Jesus, teach us that you have no body now on earth but ours;  
No hands but ours, no feet but ours;  
Ours are the eyes through which your compassion  
Must look out upon the world;  
Ours are the feet with which you must go about doing good;  
Ours are the hands with which you must bless men and women  
now; For your name's sake. Amen.*

If we accept that we carry within us the same divine spark of life, that there's a little bit of God inside each and every one of us, then the things we do, the words we say, the love we show, can all be seen as opportunities for God, through Jesus Christ, to make a difference in the world; as long as we allow it. We are the soil that can be thin and sparse, or choked with thorns, or full of health and nourishment where life could be encouraged to grow. But it's not just that simple either – as with the gardening it can be a bit more complicated.

In order for the seeds to grow we have to let them in, in the first place, to allow them to be planted in our beautiful fertile soil. If we keep this to ourselves then nothing else can grow, no matter what. Closed minds, closed doors, an unwillingness to listen, or our tendency to prejudice, or to make assumptions, these can all keep out the seeds. If we don't pay attention, then we will not hear, and we should not just hear, but strive to understand at increasingly deeper levels. Rocky ground makes for shallow soil – life can't get its roots down – we may know a lot but not in any depth, never giving anything our complete attention.

In our busyness, our hyperactivity, our crowded lives and urgency to earn a bit more money, we fill our days and leave no room for anyone else, sometimes not even our children. Isaiah invites us to sing and applaud the natural world. 'The music of mountain and hills and the clapping hands of trees are part of a vision of the new creation, when human hearts and wills are to converge with the ways and thoughts of God, and the land colonised by thorns and briars will be reclothed in myrtles and cypress' (Isa. 55.8-9, 13 - *Bridget Nicholls*)

But I'm glad to say that those who do bring their children before God today or any day are making room for them. And not just room, but space for them to grow in their relationship with God in a new creation. This is the start, the groundwork, and we pray that in their love for their children they will teach them how *everything* that lives is holy, how God-given life demands our care, our prayers, our reverence and our awe. This is the message Jesus brings, that life may be lived to the full, that new life may bear the best fruit in abundance, part of the great harvest of God. *Amen.*

## **Matthew 13:1-9 The Parable of the Sower**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake.<sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow.<sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil.<sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>Let anyone with ears listen!'

### **The Parable of the Sower Explained**

18 'Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup>As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup>yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. <sup>22</sup>As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>23</sup>But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who

indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

### **Isaiah 55.10-13**

<sup>10</sup> For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup> so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

<sup>12</sup> For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. <sup>13</sup> Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

### **Romans 8.1-11      Life in the Spirit**

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the

flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot,<sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

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