

Wednesday 15th July

**Preacher: Reverend Jane Quinton
Curate**

TRINITY 5 (Year A) -Matthew 13.1-9,18-23 – Parable of the Sower Part 2!

Well I guess this is ‘the parable of the sower’ part 2! Because having already preached on this last Sunday, like any good farmer I’m now back to add some further fertilizer to this parable.

On Sunday I spoke of the seeds of love that God wants to sow into all of our hearts, but of the need for those hearts to be ready and open to receive the seed.

Good soil as we know, is essential to cultivate any seed, but there can be much preparation and maintenance required for the soil to be right.

And I was reminded of a few years ago when Graham and I sowed some grass seed in our back garden – now we’re not the greatest of gardeners, but we had a friend who had an immaculate lawn, and so Graham asked him for some advice. That advice was: ‘water it, water it some more, and then water it some more..... and just when you think you’ve overwatered it, water it again!’

An appropriate image I think when we remember Jesus’s analogy of Himself as the ‘living water’.... the One who keeps us refreshed and nourished and able to grow...

As I reminded us on Sunday, Jesus has the words of eternal life – words that He wants to share with us, in order that we may get the best out of our lives

And so, with this in mind I want to return to Jesus’s opening word to the crowd at the beginning of our reading..... His call for them to

‘Listen!’..... to pay attention..... It is something Jesus does on many occasions throughout the New Testament – seeking our attention for our own good.

“Attention” according to 19th century French philosopher Simone Weil, “is the rarest and purest form of generosity”

I’m sure we can all relate to how it feels when we know somebody is actually being attentive to what we are saying for example....

And attention is what our generous God bestows upon us.....
And when we offer the same to Him.....when we pay similar attention to God and what He is longing to show us and teach us..... well the soil of our hearts will be watered, and fed, and the seeds of His love will grow within us.

However, continuing to use our garden imagery, that doesn’t mean that our lives will always be a bed of roses!
But Jesus promises to always be there for us ... to attend to all of our needs.....and how those little seeds need their water especially when times are dry!

And in the light of all the disruption that Covid-19 has brought into our lives, I would like to direct our focus today on to some Old Testament promises, that remind us of God’s attentiveness and care for us, especially when times are difficult.

The first is from Genesis 16, when Abraham’s slave girl Hagar is driven out into the wilderness by his wife Sarah who is jealous and bitter that Hagar has conceived when Sarah couldn’t. But in Hagar’s despair and isolation God appears to her, an occurrence that leaves Hagar amazed that God cares..... and she consequently calls the well where this has happened, ‘the well of the Living One who sees me’ (16:14)

A reminder for us today that God is constantly inviting us to come into His presence, in the knowledge that He is the God who sees us and knows us, and who looks at us with great love.

The second text is from Exodus, when the Israelites are on the edge of the Reed Sea on their journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Hemmed in with the Egyptian army descending upon them, they wonder what they can possibly do. And then God says to them: “The Lord will fight for you, you have only to keep still” (14:14)

Similarly for us, as we come into the presence of the Living One who sees us, and loves us, we also have the absolute assurance that despite all that overwhelms us in our daily lives, He, who is trustworthy and true, will be fighting our corner.

Finally, in the book of Numbers we find the Israelites on a journey that they had not chosen, in response to circumstances beyond their control it is a costly journey that means leaving much that they value behind and learning new habits and customs. It is a journey on which they often get lost, grumpy and rebellious. They long to ‘get back to normal’, even though they are no longer sure what that looks like any more.

Now interestingly, in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, the title of the book of Numbers takes its name from the opening words of the book, and therefore is entitled, ‘In the Wilderness’

And how this wilderness in which they find themselves, resonates deeply with our current experience as we grapple with the current C-19 circumstances we find ourselves in.

But, as the Israelites found then, and as others may already know from their own experience, the times of wilderness can also be a place of renewal.

Even though we may be forced to, we begin to look at things in a new way – to face ourselves as we really are, and to seek to let go of one set of habits and choices and make new and better ones.

The wilderness can be a place where we tend to the soil, digging deeply, making ourselves uniquely open to God, and allowing His

living water to revive us, to refresh us, to renew us, and to grow us
– into a crop of love that transforms us and those around.

May the sower continue to sow and help us grow.

Or in the words of the prayer of Benedict of Nursia:

O gracious and holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you, and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN