



The parable of the sower

Call to Worship

As we come before you, Lord, we prepare ourselves to receive your word. May we be fertile soil for you, seeking to remove thorns and stones from our lives.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 122

1. God whose farm is all creation,
Take the gratitude we give;
Take the finest of our harvest,
Crops we grow that all may live.
2. Take our ploughing, seeding, reaping,
hopes and fears of sun and rain,
All our thinking, planning, waiting
Ripened in this fruit and grain.
3. All our labour, all our watching,
All our calendar of care,
In these crops of you creation,
take, O God: they are our prayer

Prayers of praise, adoration and confession

Gracious God, we bring you our praise and thanksgiving as we reflect on your power in creation, gentleness in nurture and wisdom across ages.

We confess that we have not always listened to your voice, or followed your guidance, but we are confident in your unfailing compassion towards us.

Reading Isaiah 55 verses 10-13

Matthew chapter 13 verses 1-9 and 18-23

Reflection

This feels like a very familiar story; some of you will have heard it hundreds of times. It can almost feel like there is nothing new to learn. However, have you ever thought of your self as the soil, the earth, in which the seed of Gods word grows and flourishes, or withers and dies? Not only as an individual, but as “The Church” the body of Christ on Earth? We are the places where people may hear the words of Christian faith and doctrine (which means what we believe). Not just in the building of a worship space, but out in the community when we are meeting with and talking to other human beings.

The context of Jesus message was that people were expecting a Messiah who would come as a military leader. Helping people to see that was not Gods’ way, is part of Jesus ministry, hence his use of pastoral images.

The theologian Tom Wright says of this passage that “this is why the Word is so important as a theme in Jesus ministry and the early church. Jesus speaks Gods’ word, the word which announces the kingdom”

The passage from Isaiah talks about the word that goes out to do its work in people’s hearts and lives. The prophet has been telling the people in exile, to get ready to go home, but the people are not ready to listen.

We need to cultivate our own listening and understanding of God’s word, so that we can be changed; this takes effort and time.

The picture below is called “the absurd farmer”. Who would sow their seed such that only one third would grow well? This was the question that stopped people understanding what Jesus was trying to say.

He tried to reframe his story and then still had to give further explanation to his disciples.

Sometimes we need more time and learning, exploring scripture with others, to truly understand what Jesus is trying to tell us.



Hymn: Singing the Faith 255

1. The Kingdom of God
is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores;
what sin would destroy
God's power and glory
In Jesus we know
And here and hereafter
The kingdom shall grow.

2. The kingdom of God
Is mercy and grace,
The prisoners are freed,
The sinners find place,
The outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
And hope is awakened
In place of despair.

3. The kingdom of God
Is challenge and choice,
Believe the good news,
Repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
Brought Christ to his cross,
Our crisis of judgement
For gain or for loss.

4. God's kingdom is come,
The gift and the goal,
In Jesus begun,
In heaven made whole;
The heirs of the kingdom
Shall answer his call,
And all things cry Glory
To God all in all!

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, you spoke, and you brought hope, comfort, and renewal; come now and speak again, bringing your word of life to all who suffer, or are hurting. Reach out afresh with your love to all in need.

Where there is turmoil, war, despair, bring your restoration and peace. Help us to take in your word, reflect on it and share with others the joy of following you.

