

Sunday Worship at Home

Sunday 17th May 2020 Making More Disciples Theme: The Parable of the Sower

Preparation

Take a moment to sit and be still. Breathe slowly and deeply. Allow God's presence to be felt as you bring yourself closer to him.

Remember all those who will be worshipping and praying in their own homes and know that we are together in spirit.

Opening Prayer

Generous God,
We gather in our homes this morning,
to listen to your word, sing your praises
and worship You whole heartedly.

We pray that the seeds of your abundant love
will fall on fertile soil, that they take root and
flourish.

Generous God,
Nourish us, refresh us, and help us to grow
more like you each day.
Amen

Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness

Sing/ Read /Pray /Proclaim the words or listen
to it here

www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKlqmdfH5k

Prayer of thanks for today

Lord we give thanks for your presence in our
life this week.

In the beauty of nature,
in the love of family,
in the encouragement of friends,
in the moments of worry,
in the times of stress,
in the laughter and in the tears.

Lord we give thanks for your presence in the
ups and downs of our emotions this week.
We give thanks that you listen, comfort, heal,
and sustain us. We are blessed that we can
take refuge in your embracing arms whenever
we need a hug. Amen

Saying Sorry

Our world feels under attack, rocky, scorched
and choked. We can respond by feel wobbly,
unsure, irritable, and even angry.

In a moment of quiet, hold up to God the
thoughts, words, and actions that you need ask
forgiveness for.

**Heavenly Father, we come to you to ask
forgiveness of our sins and to give thanks
that you love us so much that you give it.**

Amen.

Reading – Mark 4:1-9, 13-20

The parable of the sower

4 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered round him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3 'Listen! 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, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.'

9 Then Jesus said, 'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.'

Pause here for a moment....

Take time to think about what this Parable is saying to you. Listen to the voice of Jesus telling this little story to you. Jesus told parables to make us think, so what is Jesus saying to you?

13 Then Jesus said to them, 'Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 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. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.'

Short Reflection by Gayle Bryon

I like to think that sitting in the boat on the Lake Jesus has a great view of the local terrain. He can see the terraced hillside worked by local farmers, silvery green olive groves dotting the horizon, and in the distance fertile valleys. Perhaps, he can even see a farmer sowing seeds with wild abandon. Jesus the storyteller, the great teacher, then uses this familiar image to engage his audience in some thinking and reflecting on the nature of God and the nurture of faith.

As a child, I can remember not liking this parable because it made me sad that so many seeds were eaten, scorched, or choked. I wanted them all to fall in good soil and enjoy the opportunity to thrive. Perhaps my understanding was a little naïve and simple, but it is still how I feel deep down when I listen to this parable.

Jesus paints wonderful pictures with his parables, they are energetic, inspiring, moving, and amazingly puzzling all at once. In Godly play they are represented as special gifts that we need to open and explore carefully. As with a painting or piece of music they speak to us at a deep spiritual level and we are often surprised at our own emotional response.

Kenneth Bailey in his book *Jesus through Middle Eastern eyes* describes parables as 'a house in which we are invited to take up residence'. I love this image, we can enter a parable, explore it from various rooms, and look at it through different windows. Each parable has a life and spirit of its own, we enter it with different experiences, but as true disciples we keep our focus on listening to the voice of Jesus who is telling us the parable.

If you read the Gospels chronologically, just before Jesus tells this parable Jesus's family have come to see him and Jesus tells the crowd that his mother and brothers are all those who hear God's word and obey it. This story of the farmer sowing seeds is the first of Jesus's parables, so perhaps that is why he takes time to explain it to his disciples! There are going to be many more that they will have to listen to and think about carefully.

In the middle east stories, metaphors, and proverbs are used to communicate complex thoughts and ideas. Jesus uses this parable to explain to the crowd that they must truly listen to the Word of God and respond to it in all aspects of their life. A mother, a brother, or sister of Christ is one who listens to his commands and follows them wholeheartedly. Disciples of Jesus are to strive to be like good soil, letting the seed take root, and then letting the seed grow, and grow, and grow.

Jesus draws this beautiful illustration of the sower scattering the seed with wild abandon. God's Word is for everyone. God's nature is to generously shower us with his abundant love. All the seed has the potential to fall on fertile soil, but sadly it does not. For all sorts of reasons people do not listen to the word of God or are not yet ready to receive it. Even for us, as disciples of Jesus, we will find there are times when we find our faith under attack, rocky, scorched, and choked. I am sure in this difficult time we all have our wobbles from day to day and sometimes even minute to minute. But the wonderful news is that our abundant God keeps scattering the seed, and we have the potential every minute of everyday to let the seed sink deeper into the soil, strengthen its roots and grow little by little, or in great spurts!

It follows therefore, that as disciples of Jesus, we must follow the model of the sower and spread the Word of God to all and we must never be discouraged by the response we receive. Some seeds may lay dormant, some seeds may grow slowly, some seeds may require considerable care and attention, while some seeds will grow wildly. We need to be persistent, patient and loving in our actions, and we must be praying that the sowing spirit will open hearts and minds to the truth of the Lord Jesus.

I remain sad for the seeds that have not yet accepted the message of the Kingdom, but I find great joy in being showered in God's love. I pray that with God's help I may 'tune in' and listen evermore carefully to his Word. Amen

A few questions for you to think about...

What kind of sower am I?

What sort of seed am I scattering?

What sort of soil am I?

When I am in a 'bad patch' where do I turn for help?

Enjoy reflecting as you listen to 'How can I keep from singing' by Audrey Assad

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li2hddmy63U

Intercessory Prayer

You could use the suggested prayer resources set for this Holy Habit (produced as a page at the end of this service) or follow a preferred model of prayer for yourself.

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.**

Closing Prayer for this time we live in

We are not people of fear: we are people of courage.

We are not people who protect our own safety:

we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity.

We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs

For as long as it takes wherever you call us.

Closing Blessing

Lord as you have nourished us to today, help us to nourish our community with words of encouragement and love.

Lord as we have listened to your word among us today, help us to take your message of hope and healing into our community.

Lord as you have sown and tended to the seed in our heart today, help us to sow seeds in the hearts of others and take time to help them take root and grow.

Lord as you help us through the rough patches of our lives, help us to show the same compassion and grace to our community. Amen

Enjoy a song & dance to Joy by the Rend

Collective at the suggestion of Carwen & Rhi

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDiETOLBvxA

Making More Disciples Challenge of the Week:

Share your favourite gospel story with someone else this week.

MMD Prayer:

Lord, help us to go further than we might expect or feel is comfortable. Help us to share your love in places beyond the safety of the world we know, with people who haven't heard of you. Help us to feel secure in the knowledge that your Holy Spirit will guide us. Amen.

Suggestions for Prayer today & during the week

Lectio Divina

Using the Bible Reading from today's service, we can use the ancient way of praying called Lectio Divina (which means divine reading). It is a simple way of slowing down enough to really hear God. The following instructions are just one way of praying using this method.



1. Be quiet for a few seconds, take a couple of deep breaths. Decide to focus on God for the next few minutes, perhaps close your eyes.
 2. Read today's Bible passage to yourself – either aloud or silently.
 3. Read it again, slowly.
 4. Start listening out for a word or phrase that jumps out to you, something that grabs your attention.
 5. Read it one more time, this time decide on one word or phrase.
 6. Think about the word/phrase you chose. What does it make you think of? What pictures pop into your head? What does it make you feel?
 7. Turn the word into some kind of prayer – does it make you want to say thank you, please, sorry or something else? Say your prayer to God.
 8. Just sit quietly for another few seconds.
- (taken from engageworship.org)

Prayer Jars

It can be difficult at times to decide on what to pray for. Having something like a prayer jar may help.



You could put slips of paper into the jar over the course of a week, prayers for people or situations, prayers of thanks for answered prayers etc.

During the time of prayer today (and/or during the week), you could take them out (or a few) and spend time focusing on them, offering them up to God's love, mercy and care.

Prayer Stones

The idea for using prayer stones is that they can represent people or situations.



As we are now in the Holy Habit of Making More Disciples, it may be that there is a person in particular who you are praying for to come to know and follow Christ for themselves. Think of people you know and love. Think of people you know about through the news. Is there anyone you can think of whose lives could be transformed by knowing the overwhelming love and grace of God?

Pray for them. Pray for them every day. Pray that they might come to know God's love for themselves. Pray that they might become a disciple of Jesus.

Choose stones, buttons or something colourful that can be kept somewhere as a prayer focus. When you look at the object, remember who or what it represents and offer a prayer to God.

For Children

Make a prayer rainbow using any materials you have at home or have a rainbow hunt and find objects of each colour.

Use your rainbow to pray for...

everyone who is sick
carers and delivery drivers
all those who are special to us
teachers and leaders
everyone working for the NHS
people who are feeling scared or sad
yourself



The Rainbow is a sign of hope, a sign of God's promise. Pray that in this difficult time all people may come to know the love and peace of God.