



## The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme

### 12 July 2020 - Fifth Sunday after Trinity

*Take a moment to be still. Perhaps light a candle or hold a cross.  
Be aware that others will be saying these same words and prayers.  
We are united in prayer and worship.*

*Anne Jay leads us in our opening and closing worship*

God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God and God in him.

*(1 John 4. 16)*

We have come together in the name of Christ  
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,  
to share God's holy word,  
to pray for the needs of all the world during this time  
to seek the forgiveness of our sins,  
that by the power of the Holy Spirit  
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

*Pause for reflection as you offer the day to God.*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever. Amen.

Living God,  
as we meet together now, each of us in the safety of our homes,  
sow the seed of your word in our hearts.

May it find a place to grow,  
despite all that competes for space in our lives.

May shoots of faith be able to withstand the temptations and pressures that threaten to choke them.

May new growth be seen among us,  
leading to a rich harvest of lives won for you.  
In Christ's name we ask it. Amen.



*The Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity:*

Almighty and everlasting God,  
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified:  
hear our prayer which we offer for all thy faithful people,  
that in their vocation and ministry  
they may serve thee in holiness and truth,  
to the glory of thy name;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who liveth and reigneth with thee,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

***First Reading: Romans 8:1-11***

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 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, 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. 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. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is

life because of righteousness. 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.

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word

***Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23***

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 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. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!'

'Hear then the parable of the sower. 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. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 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. 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. 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.'

Thanks be to God for the gift of his Word.

*Richard leads us in our reflection*

When Jesus was teaching the people and telling them about God, life and the Kingdom of Heaven, he often told them parables to help them understand what he was saying.

The parables are great stories which explain and illustrate. There are often layers of meaning and inferences which reveal who Jesus really was and how particular groups of people needed to change their ways.

The four Gospels record over thirty parables which Jesus told the people.

It seems though that it was not his practice to explain many of them!

The parable of the sower is one of the few stories where we have a record of Jesus explaining what it meant, and even then, it was only to the disciples.

It is a very simple story that it is easy to visualise and understand. The sower sows the seeds and depending on where it falls the fate of the seed differs.

The birds come and eat up the seed on the path. The seed on the rocky ground grows quickly but has no reserve when the heat comes, and it withers. The seed among the thorns grows well, it is good ground for growing, but when the thorns grow, they take all the goodness, swamping and choking the shoots. But there is fertile soil, free of these problems where the seed grows freely and young plants grow to their full potential and give many times more seed as their return.

You don't need to be a farmer or to sow on an industrial scale to know the truth of the story! Anyone who has ever sown anything in the garden or even just in a plant pot will have experienced all of these and felt the sowers frustration and celebration at the results.

And Jesus' explanation too is so easy to understand. The seed is the Word of God. Some people hear it and it is snatched away before it takes any root at all. Others hear it and grow enthusiastically, but when trouble comes the Word in them withers. Others hear the Word and it grows, but difficulties come and they choke the Word. But there are those who hear the Word and it grows in them so that they can spread it too, multiplying the Word still further.

I remember hearing about this parable when I was a child at Sunday School. We thought about how we are like the seeds and sometimes face different situations through our lives. Sometimes it is particularly hard to be a Christian. At other times the Spirit seems to be strong in us and we are courageous bold and fruitful.

But I wonder now if I was looking in the right place to find out where I was in the story. This is the difficulty about Jesus not explaining the story fully. But it is also the joy that we can explore the story and think carefully about what it might mean to us.

I wonder how it looks if we try to find ourselves not in the seeds or the types of ground, but if we become the sower in the story. Jesus doesn't tell us who the sower is. What if we are the sower?

Now the story becomes the life story of our mission. Through our life we will tell people about God, we will spread the Word of God, just like the parable says.

We will tell lots of people in lots of different ways. Some we will tell by the things we say, some by the fact they see us going to church, some by the way we are or by our actions. All these are seeds of the Word sown in people's lives through us.

And the people we spread the Word to will receive it in all the ways of the story. For some it will make a fleeting difference. Others will hear it and be thrilled by it for a while until something else comes along. Others will grow in it but will find it too difficult when troubles come. But there will be some who hear it and it makes a difference that they carry with them for the rest of their lives and who then become sowers who spread the seed themselves.

Perhaps the story is a challenge and an encouragement to us. We need to spread the Word freely and generously and we must not be despondent when some of the seed does not seem to grow. The parable tells us that seed can be like that! But we can know that whatever does grow will itself become fruitful. Even in the worst-case scenario it only takes one successful seed to become thirty new ones! That is a pretty good return!

So spread the Word. We have found in our faith something that can give us hope, courage, joy and peace. It does not take away the difficulties of life, but

it helps us to deal with them and gives us community and the Spirit of God to strengthen and support us.

If we find such blessing and benefit from our faith, how much more would others too. Some may ignore it, not persevere with it, or find it useful for only a while - but that is just like the seeds in the story.

There will be others for whom the faith we share and the knowledge of God's love will be a most important and life changing thing they can ever become aware of. It just takes someone to plant that seed within them.

Perhaps you are the sower they need?

Sow the Word of God freely and generously!

*Helen Ludkin leads us in our prayers*

Lord, it is so good to read your Word, and hear the parables you told.  
But, Lord, we can't leave it there. We must take note of the explanation,  
and work it out in our own lives. Help us, O Lord, to listen, to learn and to act.  
**Amen.**

For the times we dash haphazardly into your presence,  
finding it hard to leave behind our cares and worries:  
**forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.**

For the times when we don't learn from our experiences:  
**forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.**

For the times when we don't take care of ourselves,  
or the people we share our lives with:  
**forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.**

For the times we don't see what you want us to see  
and just take things at face value:  
**forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.**

For the times when we want our seed planted in neat rows,  
when our own plans become more important than yours,  
rather than letting the Holy Spirit prepare the soil of our lives  
and blow where the Spirit wants to:

**forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.**

**Amen.**

Gracious God,  
we thank you that all good gifts come from you.  
We thank you for all you have already given us.  
And, as the good soil welcomes the seed,  
and causes it to grow,  
we welcome you to take root and flourish in our lives.

**Amen.**

Lord God, we pray today for all the people  
given the great privilege of spreading your gospel.

We pray for the Church worldwide,  
but in particular in the places where people  
are still persecuted for their beliefs.

We pray for our ministers,  
who prayerfully seek your face, and bring us the words  
and understanding we need to become more faithful followers of you.

We pray for writers and poets, as they pore over your word,  
and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit  
to bring your message to life on the page.

We pray for artists and all craftspeople who draw inspiration  
from your word, and speak to us through their creations.

**Amen.**

Lord God, how can we possibly understand what you have to say to us, if we  
don't take time to listen. Help us to carve out moments this week where we  
can find a quiet corner, or even just a glance heavenward, to be with you.  
Speak to us, Lord, and bless us; and make us a blessing to others.

**Amen.**

*And we draw all of our prayers together in the words of the 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 forever. Amen.

We ask that the love of the Lord Jesus  
draws us to himself, the power of the Lord Jesus  
strengthens us in his service,  
the joy of the Lord Jesus fills our hearts;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among us and remain with us always.  
Amen

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

*Let us share the grace together, while in our minds eye we visualise our friends  
and families*

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The Love of God and  
The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with us all, evermore. Amen.

