

**Sunday Scriptures:** 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020 **Revd Janice Morgan**  
**Matthew 13:1-58** "Let anyone with ears listen!" Verses: **9**; 13-17; 35; **43**.

There is much talk about re-opening and emerging from the restrictions of this most debilitating and deadly virus pandemic. But we must exercise caution within the spiritual Body of Christ just as much as the government are warning society to do in the secular world. We have witnessed those who do their best to obey the government guidelines, exercising self-discipline, in many cases sacrificially, for the good of others. We have also witnessed those who have no respect for anything or anyone but themselves, and worse still, those who have premeditatedly sought to exploit the situation for self-gain at the expense of others. The need for discernment of God's will and purpose at this time in the history of Christ's Church is more vital than ever before. We will either emerge cleansed, new and valued in society or return to the way we were before and largely ignored, the only difference being the wearing of masks! One thing is certain; if we do not go forward in accordance with God's Word, the teaching of Jesus and His example, we will cease to be the Body of Christ.

Virtually the whole of **Matthew** chapter **13** is devoted to parables of Jesus, which provide strong teaching on the Kingdom of Heaven, for those who care to listen! Parables contain Truths concerning our relationship with God, our relationship with others, and the nature of Christian service. I have listed them in order for your convenience: *The Parable of the Sower ... 1-9*; *The Purpose of the Parables ... 10-17*; *The Parable of the Sower Explained ... 18-23*; *The Parable of Weeds Among the Wheat ... 24-30*; *The Parable of the Mustard Seed ... 31-32*; *The Parable of the Yeast ... 33*; *The Use of Parables ... 34-35*; *Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds ... 36-43*; *Three Parables: Treasure hidden in a field; Pearl of great value; Net with fish of every kind ... 44-50*; *Treasures New and Old ... 51-53*.

There is such a lot of important first-hand teaching from Jesus in His parables that cannot possibly be tackled here! However, I would encourage you to read the whole chapter in order to hear the Lord's teaching in its proper context and balance. In the meantime, I will try to pick out the salient points. Jesus emphasises the word, "Listen!" throughout, which tells us that the messages contained within His Words are vitally important. Jesus is revealing the deeper meaning contained in the WORD of God. However, He conveys these Truths in parables because not all will receive Him or His knowledge of God. Jesus makes it clear that only the 'children of the Kingdom' accept His teaching. Conversely, 'the children of the evil one' reject God's Word, choosing instead to grow as the devils 'weeds' i.e. spreading falsehood instead of Truth. Here is the first step to discerning God's Will above all else. Are you hearing words that mirror Scripture? Are you witnessing behaviour in keeping with the example of Jesus? Are you testing what you are hearing and witnessing for Truth before speaking or acting?

Jesus helpfully explains the parable of the sower to His disciples. Seed on the 'path' symbolises those who hear but do not understand, which suggests people suffering from unbelief or doubt. Where doubt exists, a gap in the armour of God appears which the devil can exploit. Seed on 'rocky ground' symbolises those who react without due consideration, suggesting people guided by their emotions. Where emotion dictates action, commitment is shallow and will not stand against trial but evaporate. Seed 'among thorns' symbolises those who succumb to the temptations of the world, which suggests two kinds of people: those overcome by the burdens of life who simply give in and those seeking material wealth. Where temptation finds no resistance evil triumphs, souls are lost, the Word of God weakened, and the Body of Christ disfigured. Seed on 'good soil' symbolises those who hear and understand what Jesus is saying, suggesting people faithful and obedient to the Word

of God. Where Scripture is followed the people are disciplined and as a result will bear much fruit. Take a moment to reflect on the deeper meaning of this parable and what ground, seed, or soil you may be representing.

Jesus also explains the parable of the weeds to His disciples, which again is helpful in deepening our understanding. Jesus is the sower teaching only the Truth of God; who He is and what He desires. The world is secular and as such cannot distinguish between 'wheat' and 'weeds'. Jesus only sows 'good seed' that is those who listen, remain faithful to the Word of God and follow His example. Jesus did not allow the understanding of the priests, academics, or even the authority of His day, influence His obedience to God. Those who follow Jesus, although planted in the world, must also not allow the world to deflect them from their faith and calling. Those who remain faithful are described by Jesus as 'the children of the Kingdom' as opposed to 'the children of the evil one' who He clearly states are planted by the devil. There seems to be reluctance in Christian preaching and teaching concerning the cause of all evil. Satan tends to be treated as myth and legend, which allows the cause of our separation from God to be dismissed or ignored. However, Jesus does not demonstrate such an aversion, quite the opposite! Jesus makes a clear distinction between those of God, whom He has called and planted, and those of the evil one, whom He has not called or planted. This should warn us that there are those in the world who are by very nature pre-disposed to evil intent, uncomfortable as that thought may be. Subsequently, such as these must be discerned from the faithful to protect the integrity of the body of Christ. This applies particularly to those who are searching or lack understanding and therefore vulnerable to deception.

Having examined just two of Jesus' many parables, what wisdom can we glean for our time and circumstance? In order to be of value to the world we need to emerge different from it, cleansed and renewed. God does not want 'the children of the Kingdom' to blend in but to stand out and shine like the beacon of Hope He intended. The Body of Christ is charged to beware of thorns and weeds growing among us, in the midst of His people. Jesus' parables are challenging because He tells us not to root the weeds out, only the Lord can do that lest we become judgemental and harm the wheat, but neither are we to tolerate speech and behaviour contrary to God's Word. Rather we are challenged to beware of those planted by the devil for evil intent, hell bent on destroying God's people, and protect those less able to protect themselves. In essence, God's people must live in Truth and ensure that those not of God are recognised and exposed for pretenders they truly are. As the people of God we must remain alert to Satan's attack and repel evil with the whole armour of God ([Ephesians 6:10-18](#)) particularly "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God". Those of God are to remain disciplined and faithful to God's Word, acting in righteousness and honouring the example of Jesus Christ His Son. Jesus did not leave us alone to do this work for we wrestle with principalities and powers that are not of this world. We are blessed with the power of the Holy Spirit to stand in faith lest the church become infected with evil as deadly to our souls as the virus pandemic is to our bodies!

What is God saying to us through these parables? Are we listening or do our ears need syringing? Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news" and He calls us to follow Him and learn how to "fish for people" ([Mark1:14-17](#)). This means repenting of past mistakes and working forward to save souls; building God's Kingdom on earth. ALL lives matter, not just those who shout the loudest or tweet the most! There are softer voices in dire need of healing too and it does not help harmony to raise one voice above another. Many are those, the world over, who have suffered injustices of one

sort or another and therefore in need of healing. Where are 'the children of the Kingdom' endowed with the Holy Spirit to bring it to them? The world needs love, yes, but what kind of love – Physical (Eros); Family (Storge); Affectionate (Philia); or Sacrificial choice (Agape)? The love of God is not weak or blurred round the edges and to exercise God's love we are commanded to reveal Truth, serve justice and restore righteousness, in our time more than ever. The people of the world, without exception, need the solid foundation of the Kingdom of God. The House of God is needed urgently in this time of upside down morals and inside out principles, to lead the world in restoring righteousness. Jesus gave His very life as the ultimate sacrifice to eradicate the corruption of evil and restore the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. Do we have ears to listen to His voice above all others? I pray that we do. Amen!

**Hymn/Song: O Thou Who Camest From Above** – Charles Wesley (1707-1788) HP 745

O Thou Who camest from above  
The pure celestial fire to impart  
Kindle a flame of sacred love  
On the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for Thy glory burn  
With inextinguishable blaze  
And trembling to its source return  
In humble prayer and fervent praise

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
To work, and speak, and think for Thee;  
Still let me guard the holy fire  
And still stir up Thy gift in me-

Ready for all Thy perfect will  
My acts of faith and love repeat  
Till death Thy endless mercies seal  
And make the sacrifice complete.

**Poem: HIDE & SEEK** ©Janice Morgan-1996

What should be sought and what should be hidden,  
When life with evil and pain is ridden?  
What do we seek and what is it we find,  
When power and politics make us blind?  
The world speaks of this, God tells us of that,  
To walk between both is to fall down flat!

What man speaks of law when his child is born?  
What wife speaks of love when her flesh is torn?  
Some say what they mean and live in the Truth,  
Some twist what is said like a trickster sleuth!  
If we believe all and then compromise,  
We act like the fool, not one who is wise!

Who should we believe and who should we trust,  
When trials and traumas make their full thrust?  
One who will counsel the ways of the world,  
Or one who will **listen**, and heed God's Word?  
We all must choose and we reap what is sown,  
Our lives tell the story by which we are known!

One who speaks wisdom, yet lives as a fool,  
Is one who is working as Satan's tool.  
One who speaks folly, yet acts as if wise,  
Is one who has learned to tell the world's lies.  
One who KNOWS wisdom is one who LOVES God,  
Who feed and grow in God's moist, rich sod.

There's only one God who imparts to all,  
The promise of love – salvation from fall.  
His Word is our counsel, His Son our guide,  
All must be measured by this rule of slide.  
Discernment is given by God alone,  
Read what He's written and live what He's shown!