

**TAKE TIME OUT –** *Pastoral Retreat*

Half Acre, Horton Heath, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7JS  
Tel: 01202-824834 – Email: [janice.morgan@methodist.org.uk](mailto:janice.morgan@methodist.org.uk)

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup>** before Easter:

**Luke 8:1-8** *The parable of the sower*

<sup>1</sup>Soon afterwards He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, <sup>2</sup>as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, <sup>3</sup>and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources. <sup>4</sup>When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to Him, He said in a parable; <sup>5</sup>"A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. <sup>6</sup>Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. <sup>7</sup>Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup>Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold." As He said this He called out, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

**Luke 8:9-15** *The parable of the sower explained*

<sup>9</sup>Then His disciples asked Him what this parable meant. <sup>10</sup>He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that '*looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand*' (Isaiah 6:9-10). <sup>11</sup>"Now the parable is this; The seed is the Word of God. <sup>12</sup>The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the Word from their hearts, so they may not believe and be saved. <sup>13</sup>The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the Word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. <sup>14</sup>As for what fell among the thorns, those are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. <sup>15</sup>But as for that in the good soil, there are the ones who, when they hear the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

**Luke 8:16-18** *See the light and pay attention*

<sup>16</sup>No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those enter may see the light. <sup>17</sup>For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light. <sup>18</sup>Then pay attention to how you listen; for to those who have, more will be given; and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away."

**Luke 8:19-21** *Family*

<sup>19</sup>Then His mother and His brothers came to Him, but they could not reach Him because of the crowd. And He was told, 'Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see You.' <sup>21</sup>But He said to them, "My mother and My brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it."

\*\*\*\*\*

**Reflection:**

Jesus is traveling with His closest friends proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. A great crowd of people from all over the surrounding area came to listen to Him. They would have been from a mixture of backgrounds, circumstances and occupations including women and children. Most would be uneducated, just ordinary folk getting on with life, but some would have been there simply out of curiosity or even to find fault. So Jesus uses a parable that compares something familiar to something unfamiliar, in this case farming and the Kingdom of God. Parables contain spiritual Truth revealed through everyday objects, practice and relationships. They encourage the listener to look beyond the surface content to discover the deeper meaning, while at the same time concealing Truth from stubborn hearts and antagonists. Jesus leads them through the story step by step in simple terms that all can

## Sunday Scriptures: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in LENT

easily recognise. However, He does not explain the spiritual content but just leaves them hanging with a proclamation, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" This alerts those with open hearts that there is more to this than meets the eye and Jesus wants us to look beyond His literal words. Those truly seeking God, desiring to follow His Word, will, and purpose for their lives, will search for meaning and apply it to everyday living. Not all will want this and accepting that others may have a different focus for life, is most challenging to those who believe. The example of Jesus is one of faith for us to follow: we search for Truth and proclaim Truth, then leave it out there for others to make their own choice. Some will have 'ears to listen' and ask searching questions of us, some will be deaf and turn away, and still others will choose to challenge the Truth we proclaim. Whatever response we encounter, requires empathy, discernment and faith. *Do we have 'ears to listen' and open hearts to search for Truth beyond that which we can see?*

Human ears tend only to hear what they *want* to hear! Jesus was travelling with those whose hearts were true; they wanted to listen and hear what Jesus taught. True hearts searching and hearing will 'know the secrets of the Kingdom of God'. At the same time Jesus quotes from **Isaiah's** call to explain that this blessing is selective as not all will be given insight or understanding even of what is right under their nose! This bears a responsibility to use well what God has given. It is not enough to go to church, to sing hymns or songs and to listen to the prayers of others, we must fully engage with God for ourselves in every aspect of our lives. If we do not, we will remain deaf and blind to the deeper meaning of the Word of God and deprive ourselves of the blessings that God desires to give us. In a discussion over a cuppa after a service the question arose, *'how often do we read the Bible and pray?'* One member answered instantly with gusto, *"Oh I don't pray or read the Bible! That's why I come to church, to listen to you – you do that for me!"* Whilst it is good that he was 'listening' he wasn't really 'hearing'! *How attentive are we to hearing the Word of God?*

In Jesus' day seeds were scattered by hand and therefore germinated where they fell according to wind, terrain and weather. Farmers were generous in the amount of seeds thrown out so that enough would fall into prepared soil, take root and produce a good crop. Jesus uses this practice to explain the deeper secrets of the Kingdom of God. The seed, being God's Word, is given out generously that all might be saved, if they will but open their hearts to receive it. The four different soils relate to different types of people and the diverse ways of responding to God's Word. Seed on the path translates as those who know God's Word at a surface level but don't take it in. When life gets difficult the world encroaches, the whisperings of Satan take over; belief is blocked and salvation denied. Seed on the rock pertains to those who rise up full of the Lord and eager for God's Word. Although fervent in nature, their belief has no substance. When prayers are seemingly not answered or things don't go the way they expect, they simply give up and disappear. Seed landing among thorns relates to those who weigh the Word of God on an intellectual level. World view, wealth, personal desires and temptations drown out the voice of God. Reason prevails over belief and worldly influence corrupts the Truth of 'good news' into fake news. Seed falling on good soil describes those with ears, eyes and hearts open to the voice of God. These are the True people of God because they search for the deeper meaning of His Word, follow the example of His Son, and apply the wisdom they gain to the life they live. *Which soil are we? Has God's Word grown deep roots of faith that feed and nurture the soul with good news?*

We can be like any one of these soils at any given time in our lives and our responses will differ according to the state of readiness the soil of our heart is in. Sometimes we may listen

**Sunday Scriptures: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in LENT**

and obey, like good soil. Sometimes we may ignore God's Word and stubbornly do our own thing, like hard rock. Sometimes we can willingly apply God's message in some areas of our life but resist it in others. For example we may be open to God about our future but closed when it comes to giving God the here and now. As always, Jesus was laying out our options for us to choose by our own free-will. Belief cannot be forced; commitment to follow the Word of God and example of Jesus are not obligatory. The choice is ours; not the imposition of someone or something else but ours alone! We, and no other, must choose our own soil and take responsibility for the crop we produce, for good or for ill, with or without God. Faith is God's miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit and to receive it all we have to do is choose to follow Jesus Christ. Once that choice is made, we need not be discouraged if others listen, challenge or ridicule, because by faith we will be given all we need to endure and to conquer. *How will we choose to respond to the message of God's Word?*

God wants us to produce something good with our lives and see the results of our efforts. God desires a return on His Word, something that makes a difference in the world, growing what can benefit others as well as ourselves in growing His Kingdom. After explaining the spiritual meaning of the agricultural parable Jesus delivers a warning. Light exposes what is hidden; what is said and done in secret will be revealed in Truth. Those who 'pay attention' will know this and be rewarded those who do not take note will suffer sanctions. When working with teenagers with emotional and behavioural difficulties I would sometimes ask them if they would say and do the same thing if their grandmother was present. It usually had the effect of creating at least a pause in their inappropriate behaviour, if not always a change! We are all in need of a 'pause' in our behaviour from time to time to remind ourselves that God is watching and God knows. Those 'who hear the Word of God and do it' are brothers and sister with Christ in the Family of God. May we all 'pay attention' to the only One who can save our soul and produce good fruit that feeds a starving world. **Amen!**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Hymn/Song: CD: I Planted A Seed** [BBC Come & Praise 134](#)

*can also be found on YouTube BBC Come & Praise 2 CD:2*

I planted a seed and now that seed is growing,  
Oh how that seed is growing out of all the ground of me!  
I planted a seed but there's no way of knowing,  
But there's no way of knowing, is it fruit or flower or weed?  
There is no way of showing till it blooms for all to see.

I planted a thought and now that thought is taking,  
Oh how that thought is taking over all the mind of me!  
I planted a thought, and love or hate its breaking,  
And love or hate it's breaking out and never will be caught;  
And love or hate it's making of the way you think of me.

I planted a word and now that word is yelling,  
Oh how that word is yelling out of all the mouth of me!  
I planted a word and truth or lie it's telling,  
And truth or lie it's telling just whenever it is heard.  
Whatever it is spelling, it will soon be clear to see.

I planted a deed and how that deed is spreading,  
Oh how that deed is spreading far beyond the reach of me!  
I planted a deed, for good or bad it's heading,  
For good or bad it's heading – oh who knows where it will lead?  
Should I be glad, or dreading – here it comes straight back to me!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Sunday Scriptures: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in LENT**

**Poem: THE TREE OF LIFE** ©Janice Morgan-1996

The tree of life grows full strong,  
as it drinks of the springs of living water,  
through roots planted deep in the fertile soil of prayer,  
its boughs bending in the winds of pain,  
as it reaches toward the warm rays of love from the Son,  
its leaves changing in the seasons of struggle,  
as its buds swell watered by the rains of His Spirit,  
to burst open in the strains of re-birth,  
blossoming in a fulsome aroma of the Word,  
bearing fruit that ripens in maturity,  
till the seeds of its life are all sown,  
then the soul from within,  
departing on the breeze,  
is born up to the heavenly realms,  
where at last it finds rest,  
abiding in eternal peace.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Prayer:**

Father God, out of the soil of the earth You formed us and breathed life into us; Lord Jesus Christ, You walked on the earth and trod the soil both dry and wet, lifeless and productive; Spirit of God You search the earth and the people who live on it to find the fertile soil of belief. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, prepare our hearts into good soil and plant in us the seed of Your Word that we may produce the good fruit of faith that saves the soul. **Amen!**

\*\*\*\*\*