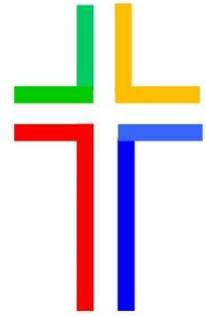


Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 12 July



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PRAYER

The Bible tells us that the sower went out to sow. We praise You that You have made the world so that it will grow the things that we need to live. Lord, we praise You for Your work of creation. The work of the sower would mean that he would have to walk up and down the field many times as he sowed the seed, not stopping until the work was done. Lord, we praise You because You are always working. As the sower walked up and down,

he threw his seed all round, making sure that all the ground was covered. Lord, we praise You for your generosity. When the sower had finished, he would go home to rest from his work. Lord, we praise You for times of rest and refreshment. We thank You for the rest that we can enjoy today. Give us glad and thankful hearts, so that we may remember all that You have done for us, And praise You as You deserve. **Amen**

READING FOR TODAY Matthew 11:1-9;18-23 (NIV)

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: '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. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.'¹⁸ 'Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ when

anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ 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. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.'

REFLECTION

It isn't really the parable of the sower, it's the parable of the soils. It was probably first told to explain why so many people heard Jesus, but didn't follow him. The gospel writers probably faced similar

questions in their own days, as to why world-changing revival wasn't happening. The answer is that not everybody is ready or willing to receive what God gives. The explanation of the parable shows a number of things which stop people from receiving and responding. Salvation is a gift, but it isn't automatic. People need to respond, to receive it, so as to allow God to do his wonderful work within us. There is a point to be drawn from the parable which Jesus doesn't mention, but which is there for us to pick up for ourselves. The sower scatters seed in that field every season. He knows that there are places where it is unlikely to take root, and that a certain amount of seed will never grow, but he scatters it nevertheless, for the sake of the amount which will take root and flourish. God's grace is generous and unfailing. So, what sort of soil are we?

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HYMN H&P 352 STF 130 (and on the CD)

We plough the fields and scatter

The good seed on the land,

But it is fed and watered

By God's almighty hand:

He sends the snow in winter,

The warmth to swell the grain,

The breezes and the sunshine,

And soft, refreshing rain.

Chorus:

All good gifts around us

Are sent from heaven above;

Then thank the Lord,

O thank the Lord,

For all his love.

He only is the maker

Of all things near and far;

He paints the wayside flower,

He lights the evening star;

The winds and waves obey him,

By him the birds are fed;

Much more to us, his children,

He gives our daily bread.

We thank thee then, O Father,

For all things bright and good,

The seed time and the harvest,

Our life, our health, our food.

Accept the gifts we offer

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And what thou most desirest,

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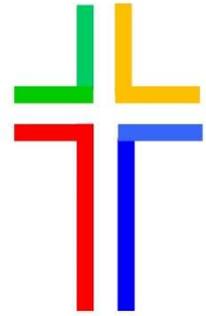
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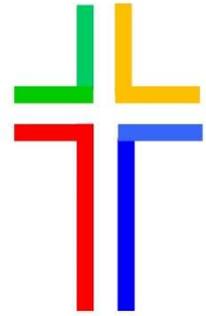
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