

12/7/20 Trinity 5 (week 17)

Hello again to you all.

My garden is blooming at the moment. With the good weather and the rain, flowers have blossomed on plants I've never seen before. I bought a Hosta plant at our Summer fayre a couple of years ago and this year it has the most beautiful lilac flowers on it. There also seems to be strawberries growing in patches and in one of the pots there's a flower that looks like a purple pansy. Purple is my favourite colour and the different shades are lovely. I know everyone has been busy in their gardens when the sun is out so I imagine there is a riot of colour out there!!

In this week's reading from Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23, Jesus tells the Parable of the Sower which is the first of a run of parables. In this one there are two parts, first the 'story' and secondly the explanation. Jesus always talked about things that were relatable and as he preached at the lakeside to the gathered crowd, there would probably have been someone in the field sowing seeds as he spoke.

In researching this reading, as I like to do, I found that the fields in Palestine were in long narrow strips and the ground between were public pathways so the ground would have been quite hard with all the feet that had trampled on it. If any seed fell there it was unlikely that it would go into the soil but stay on the surface. The stony ground was not literally filled with stone but had a thin cover of soil on the top with limestone rock underneath so as it was only a few inches deep. The seed would germinate in the warm sunshine but the roots would find no depth and nourishment so it would wither away. The thorny ground was deceptive as it would look clear on the surface but underneath there would be roots of weeds and thorns which would eventually grow along with the seed and kill it off as the weeds were stronger. The good ground was deep and clean so the seed could settle into the soil, find nourishment and then grow into an abundant harvest.

So these were different ways to illustrate how God's word is accepted by people and any emerging fruit would depend upon whether it was someone with a closed mind with no chance of God's word taking root, one that initially accepts what they hear but takes it no further, one that has so much going on in their lives that there's no time, or it could be someone whose mind is open and willing to learn, understand and turn God's word into action.

The parable as Jesus told it was aimed at the listeners who were gathered but later Jesus gave an explanation to the disciples which he always did in private as they would be the 'sowers' who would sow the seeds of God's word. And disciples are all of us, whether we preach, speak about God in our conversations or testify by sharing our faith. People are different as to how they respond and it can be discouraging to think that your words may have fallen onto hard or rocky ground. But Jesus assures us that the harvest will come so we should take this parable as an encouragement every time we linger when an opportunity presents itself, and just go for it.

This reminds of the verses in Isaiah, 55:10-11: "For as the rain and snow comes down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it spring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

When we think about our Rule of Life, the Tell and Share aspects of it are what we practice here. As Jesus shared with his disciples, we are all disciples too, God's representatives, the sowers of the seeds. Whatever we say or do to others, in His name, will come to fruition at some point, though we may never see the results. Wherever God's word is sown, it will not be wasted. If we are discouraged, we must not believe that our words have been for nothing, but trust that God will use them for great things and will be returned to him, purpose – or mission - accomplished.

Amen

With Love and Prayers

Rev Tracey xx