

6TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Rev. Cara Heafey, Associate Minister, Summertown URC



Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

**READ:
MATTHEW
13:1-9, 18-23**

“Let anyone with ears listen!”

REFLECT:

For many of us this period of lockdown has been an opportunity to give our gardens some care and attention.

I must confess that I’m not much of a gardener. My main responsibility in our garden is the weeding, and I’m sorry to say that I’ve been known to mistake flowers (including two clematis plants) for weeds in my enthusiasm! Under Carolyn’s supervision I’m learning, slowly.

This year we’ve done lots of planting from seed and now have masses of basil, and tomatoes, carrots, and beetroot plants well established and promising a good harvest. Even with my limited knowledge and experience I have some

grasp of the role soil plays in growing healthy and resilient plants. The preparation work of turning over the beds and digging in lovely dark compost from our compost bin has, I'm sure, helped new plants to get established. There is something beautifully efficient in the way nature recycles its waste, and something wonderfully theological in the idea of death and decay laying the groundwork for new life. Jesus' parable underlines the importance of "good soil"; the soil being the people who "hear the word of the kingdom." It's a rich metaphor, worth spending time with.

First, I suggest, we should consider ourselves as soil. What preparation work do we do, or could we do, to become fertile ground for God's plans to take root and grow? Do we seek out spiritual nourishment to enrich us? Are our lives crowded with too many worries and distractions ('thorns'), or do we clear space to listen and receive? Is our faith shallow? Or deep enough that we will hold onto God's word through times of trouble? Work on our "inner" lives; prayer, reflection, creativity, conversation, stillness and the pursuit of understanding, all of these things are part of the work of discipleship and are like digging and turning the soil, adding nutrients, and incorporating the rich inheritance of our tradition and forebears.

Secondly, I suggest, we should consider ourselves as sowers. The sower in the parable seems extravagant, even wasteful with the seed, flinging it without much care for where it lands. Initial results seem disappointing, as were Jesus' experiences in the surrounding chapters of being met with indifference or outright rejection. But Jesus persists in his ministry. And the parable ends with surprising abundance, a harvest beyond all expectations. Perhaps a message of hope for us, and a call to faithfully scatter love, kindness and the Good News of God's presence and promise in the world, undeterred by disappointment. Trusting that enough, more than enough, more, even, than we could ever hope for will take root and flourish.

CONNECT:

Becoming good soil - make a conscious effort to incorporate one or more of these things into your week:

- Rest. Soil, like us, can be over-worked! Leaving fields fallow can give them time to re-store and re-balance.
- Nourishment. Give time to something that enriches, rather than depletes, your inner resources.

Sowing seeds - this week we pray for:

- People or situations that may seem without hope or like 'a lost cause.'
- The ability to give freely and with love, without needing to receive thanks or affirmation.

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS:

Our friends at Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website:

www.wheatleyurc.org.uk

If you need any help, have a prayer request, or would like someone to talk to; please contact your elder or one of us:
Revd. Pauline Main
Tel: 01865 513581 or 07931 305803
Revd. Cara Heafey
Tel: 01865 863053 or 07835 172206