



# Sunday Reflection

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 12 July 2020

# Pentecost 6

while all Church worship in the buildings is suspended

On this 6th Sunday after Pentecost, and the fifth Sunday after Trinity, we hear the parable of the sower and consider how we might prepare ourselves to receive God's word and allow it to bear fruit in our lives and in the lives of others.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit."** Matthew 13:23

### An Illustration to set the scene

As they prepare for Christmas and Easter, the people of St Edmund's Church deliver leaflets to every household in their parish. The leaflets show all the services and activities taking place to celebrate these festivals and invite everyone to come along and join in.

Realistically, the people of St Edmund's know that probably most of these leaflets will go straight into the recycling box, unread, along with other "junk" mail. There will be quite a high number read by families who think it would be nice to go to one of those services and stick the leaflet up on their noticeboard. But Christmas or Easter comes along and they have guests and it's

all very busy so in the end they don't join the people of St Edmund's.

Every year, though, there are people who do attend a service or other event and who are touched deeply by something in the words or music and are drawn into the fellowship. And that's why St Edmund's do this faithfully every year. They send out the leaflets trusting that God will use them to speak to those who are ready to respond to their invitation. And if someone doesn't respond one year, who knows? Maybe next year will be the time for them.

### **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

Today's parable opens with the pastoral scene of a farmer sowing seed on his land. The seed has a mixed reception as it lands on different sorts of ground. Jesus explains the meaning of the parable to his disciples, telling them that the seed is the word of the kingdom. As they listen, the disciples might identify either with the sower proclaiming the kingdom, or with those who hear that message. We might perhaps do the same, because at different times we are both sower and listener.

There's the very shallow soil of the pathway where the kingdom seed lies on the surface of someone's life. Sometimes we might resist and not allow God's word to enter our hearts at all, so it never gets a chance to take root within us.

Then there's the rough rocky ground of a troubled life, where seed can't flourish because it can't reach nourishment. Our initial excitement about what we hear of God's kingdom dies away as life gets busy or when we know colleagues might laugh or criticise us for our enthusiasm. We resist thinking any more about that profound experience that could change our lives.

Some seed falls on lives that are beleaguered by insurmountably prickly or painful issues. Perhaps we have never known the sort of love that God offers or can't believe that we deserve it.

But there is also seed that lands in lives that can receive, understand and nurture it. Sometimes our hearts and minds are open to receive what God is saying to us and we flourish and bear fruit for ourselves and for others.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

There is encouragement in these words for the disciples and for us as listeners and sowers. As listeners we are encouraged to nurture our spiritual lives so that we can really listen to God's word with open hearts and minds. We can learn to protect those seeds, to remain committed to the kingdom even in dark and difficult times. We will each have our own way of doing this. We might dedicate time each day for Bible reading and reflection, for prayer on our own or with others with whom we might share our experiences and insights. These things might require discipline, but we can be sure that they will bear fruit in our lives.

As sowers we are encouraged to believe that, when we speak to others of God's kingdom, or show them the love of God, we are not alone. We are called to sow the seed, deliver the leaflet, plant ideas and be loving towards others, but God will also be working to bring the seed we plant to full growth and fruition.

Finally, to help these words grow within us, it's worth reading the words of Isaiah 55:10-13: *"My word... that goes out from my mouth... shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

**“But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit.”** Matthew 13:23

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**