



The Methodist Church In Ireland

Sunday 19th July, “Which Soil?”

This short act of worship has been prepared so that you can spend some moments with God, knowing that other people in your local congregation and beyond are sharing in this same act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

O God, we gather in your presence with expectation, hungry for an encounter with you, eager to hear you Word.

Open our eyes and ears to the presence of Your Holy Spirit. May the seeds of Your Word scattered among us this morning fall on fertile soil. May they take root in our hearts and lives and produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, our teacher and our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: Let all the world in every corner sing

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful song

1 Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King!
The heavens are not too high,
his praise may thither fly;
the earth is not too low,
his praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King

2 Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King!
The church with psalms must shout;
no door can keep them out,
but, above all, the heart
must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King!

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Genesis 25: 19-34

Jacob and Esau

¹⁹ This is the account of the family line of Abraham’s son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²² The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD.

²³ The LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger.”

²⁴ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ^b ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. ^c Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷ The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. ²⁸ Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom. ^[d])

³¹ Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

³² “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”

³³ But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

Let us pray

O Holy One, we call to you and name you as eternal, ever-present, and boundless in love. Yet there are times, O God, when we fail to recognize you in the dailyness of our lives. Sometimes shame clenches tightly around our hearts, and we hide our true feelings. Sometimes fear makes us small, and we miss the chance to speak from our strength. Sometimes doubt invades our hopefulness, and we degrade our own wisdom.

Holy God, in the daily round from sunrise to sunset, remind us again of your holy presence hovering near us and in us. Free us from shame and self-doubt. Help us to see you in the moment-by-moment possibilities to live honestly, to act courageously, and to speak from our wisdom. Amen

Romans 8: 1-11

Life Through the Spirit

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of ^[e] his Spirit who lives in you.

Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around 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

Gardening of any type can leave people scratching their heads and either reaching for a hastily bought gardening book or searching on google, or maybe even reaching for an artificial alternative!

Jesus’ parable is not restricted to those who are gifted gardeners or farmers, those who understand the mechanisms needed to do it well.

Jesus’ parable of the sower is aimed at everyone: the people who listen, and even those who don’t.

The parable teaches that there are different ways of hearing God’s word and they produce different kinds of fruit.

Those who have the shut mind, feel that they have nothing to learn, unteachable. Therefore, hard and blind to the things of God.

Those who are shallow in their thinking, not really thinking it all through with any depth. So, they may respond at first with enthusiasm to the things of God, but the eagerness wears off and they move on to something else.

Those who are busy, their lives are filled with many things, many interests and cares. So, their ability to hear and fully understand what is truly important is absent. They are too busy to pray or meditate on God’s word, too preoccupied with the next thing to do.

Then there are those whose minds are open. This person is willing to listen and learn. They are not too busy or proud to learn. They listen in order to understand.

Which soil are you in?

Respond/Reflect

Take some time now to reflect and respond to God as you think about what type of soil you are in.

Ask him to open your mind if it is closed, deepen your relationship if it is wavering, to slow down the pace of your life or help you to uphold what you have with him.

A time of Prayer

The seed of Your kingdom is forever being sown into our lives, our world. But it doesn’t always take root. Sometimes it fails to find a place to grow.

And so we pray.....

For ourselves and others when life make us hard and resistant like a well-trodden path where old habits, old systems ad old patterns of thinking keep your message from growing;

For ourselves and others when we become so immersed in the short-lived, shallow, rock-hiding soil of the moment where your life too easily gets blown away by the wind;

For ourselves and others when our fears, insecurities, desires and self-absorption tangle like thorns around Your grace and choke it into silence.

For ourselves and others when Your truth brings out the best in us and we grow in compassion and justice in service and worship.

(John can de Laar 2008)

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father.....

Hymn: Show Us Christ

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful hymn

Prepare our hearts, O God
Help us to receive
Break the hard and stony ground
Help our unbelief
Plant Your Word down deep in us
Cause it to bear fruit
Open up our ears to hear
Lead us in Your truth

*Show us Christ, show us Christ
O God, reveal Your glory
Through the preaching of Your Word
Until every heart confesses Christ is Lord*

Your Word is living light
Upon our darkened eyes
Guards us through temptations
Makes the simple wise
Your Word is food for famished ones
Freedom for the slave
Riches for the needy soul
Come speak to us today

Where else can we go, Lord
Where else can we go
You have the words of eternal life
Where else can we go

(Doug Plank, Bob Kauflin 2011)

A prayer of Blessing

May we recognise our soil, open our hearts and minds to the truth of Your Word, trusting and faithfully seeking to have a deep and lasting relationship with our Lord so that the fruit would be bountiful. **Amen.**

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