



(image poetrysoup)

'The Generous Nature of God'

We take a breath and come intentionally into God's presence

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

We bring before God our lament for the week that has passed and our better hope for the future. Lord have mercy: **Christ have mercy.**

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us. May our hearts and minds be open to all you have to say and show us this day. **Amen.**

Bible Reading Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Reflection

This familiar passage has so many pathways to examine. I was inspired this week by Debie Thomas's writing on how this passage shows the generosity of God's nature, which I hadn't read into it before. But the more I look at it the more I see it. Jesus talks about the sower who throws and spreads the seed with generous abandonment, scattering them to the wind to land wherever they may.

Perhaps, because we have our first post lockdown wedding next week, I imagine a flower girl or boy joyfully and lavishly chucking handfuls of rose petals up into the air, over the churchyard and at one another before the arrival of a bride!

The sower's seeds may find fertile ground and germinate boldly, others might spring up but quickly flop back down, others are sitting there waiting, waiting for a time when any or all conditions are right before they dare to poke through, and some decide having started to grow, that actually it is much more comfortable not to and decide to stay as they were. But and this underlines God's generosity, Debie Thomas says 'Here's the surprising part of the story, the sower doesn't mind. He doesn't mind one bit'.

How wonderful is that! Response or no response, God continues to throw 'seed' – word, love, wisdom, prophets to reign down on us, regardless of whether we are ready or willing to accept them. Sometimes we 'see' and catch that moments mystical radiance and run with it, sometimes we just get a passing glimpse of it but we can't quite hold on to it, sometimes we just don't see it or we consciously and deliberately turn away from it. Yet still it keeps coming!

I wonder how open we are to receive God's love, grace and moulding?

I wonder how generous we are in our commitment to an abundant overflowing love, that is open and willing to grow in relationship with God and one another?

To boldly respond as the Spirit of God prompts new realisations and revelations?

To be the fertile soil that helps others to flourish?

Kahlil Gibran in The Prophet said "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give."

Are we ready to truly give of ourselves?

What is it that has been stirring your heart in the night watches?

What is it that God is calling for you to do, or commit to?

And what if you are out of energy and vision, and feel poking your head back down is the most appealing place to be? Then just remember the unending abundance of God's love for you, and your positive action is to sit and be held and healed in the warmth and radiance of Gods embrace.

Amen

Worship Music

The Church's One Foundation with lyrics- 250 Voice Mass Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LZVz1guz2c>

I the Lod of Sea and Sky with lyrics: St Andrew's Metropolitan Cathedral Choir, Glasgow <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

Trust and Obey- Lucy Gibson (attached)

Sing to the North and the South with lyrics:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctc3GqWaV3U>

Prayers

God of mercy, Lord of life
You have made us in your image to reflect your grace and light.
Thank you for your great generosity and mercies to us, new every morning.
Grant us rich awareness of your presence and
strengthen us in our weaknesses to be faithful to the calling we have in you.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, Lord of life,
Breathe your healing, freedom from evil and peace across the world.
Grant wisdom and a desire for good to all leaders and governments.
Give insight to those developing medicines and vaccines and generosity to freely
share knowledge and resources.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, Lord of life,
We thank you for the beauty and diversity of your creation.
Help us to protect and nurture it.
Bring relief to countries experiencing famine, wildfires, flooding and divisive
leadership.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, Lord of life,
We pray for those who have lost or are in fear of losing their jobs,
business or financial security.
We pray for all who are homeless and hungry.
Those who are fearful for today and tomorrow.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, Lord of life,
We pray for all who are unwell, all who are struggling in body, mind or spirit.
Touch them with your healing, and hold them in your warm embrace.
We lift before you all those for whom we pray....
And those who have no one to pray for them....
We pray for one another...
For our family and friends...
For our own needs and frailties...
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, Lord of life,
We commend to your safe keeping all those who have recently died...
All whom we have loved and for who our hearts grieve....
We thank you for them and for your reassurance of your heavenly kingdom
and your great faithfulness in life and death. **Amen.**

In this moment of stillness we lift before God the prayers of our own hearts

We commend ourselves and the whole of creation to your unending love.

Merciful Father,

**Accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

**Our Father, who art in heaven;
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ Amen.**