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We don't always hear God's word, we don't always listen to God's word, we sometimes get distracted by the world and what's happening around us but God's word remains; it continues to be spread, it continues to be sown, in a church building, in a home, in a family, in a friendship. May God's message fall on us as we take the time to worship Him through these words. Amen.



Prayer for peace: Almighty God , from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed; kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all men, a true love of peace; and guide, with Your truth and love and wisdom, those who take counsel for the nations of the world that in tranquillity Your Kingdom may go forward until the earth is filled with the knowledge of Your love. Amen

Call to worship: Some words from Isaiah 55. "For as rain and snow can't go back once they've fallen, but soak into the ground and nourish the plants that grow, providing seed to the farmer and bread for the hungry, so it is when I declare something. My word will go out and not return to Me empty, but it will do what I wanted; it will accomplish what I determined."

Hymn: StF 124 ...for the ploughing, sowing reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping ... thanks be to God

For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God. for the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safekeeping, thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour, God's will is done, in the help we give our neighbour, God's will is done.
In our worldwide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God. For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,
most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

Prayers: Wherever we are today - on a path, stumbling over rocks, choked by thorns or surrounded by good soil, help us to face our own challenges, whatever they may be, with inspiration and courage through Your love. Loving God, You are worthy of our worship and adoration; generous and extravagant, You sow gifts for us , You sow Your word for us, You sow promises, grace, love and salvation for us. Your grace protects us from the hungry birds that might steal us away, from the rocks that might stop us from growing in Your love, from the thorns of the world that might choke us. Help us put down our roots in good soil and grow in love and care and wisdom. We don't always succeed, forgive us; we keep You at a distance, forgive us; we put up barriers against others and judge them, forgive us; we refuse Your guidance and we waste Your gifts, forgive us. Amen

Reading: Matthew 13 1 to 9 & 18 to 23 Hear the Gospel of Christ; **Glory to Christ our Saviour**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. A large crowd gathered around him. So he got into a boat and sat down. All the people stayed on the shore. Then Jesus used stories to teach them many things. He told them this story: "A farmer went out to sow seed. While he was scattering the seed, some of it fell by the road. The birds came and ate all that seed. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where there was not enough dirt. It grew very fast there, because the soil was not deep. But when the sun rose, it burned the plants. The plants died because they did not have deep roots. Some other seed fell among thorny weeds. The weeds grew and stopped the good plants from growing. But some of the seed fell on good ground. There it grew and made grain. Some plants made 100 times more grain, some 60 times more, and some 30 times more. You people who hear me, listen!"

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"So listen to the meaning of that story about the farmer: "What about the seed that fell by the path? That is like the people who hear the teaching about God's kingdom but do not understand it. The Evil One comes and takes away what was planted in their hearts. "And what about the seed that fell on rocky ground? That is like the people who hear the teaching and quickly and gladly accept it. But they do not let the teaching go deep into their lives. They keep it only a short time. As soon as trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching they accepted, they give up. "And what about the seed that fell among the thorny weeds? That is like the people who hear the teaching but let worries about this life and love for money stop it from growing. So it does not produce a crop in their lives. "But what about the seed that fell on the good ground? That is like the people who hear the teaching and understand it. They grow and produce a good crop, sometimes 100 times more, sometimes 60 times more, and sometimes 30 times more." This is the Gospel of Christ; **Praise to Christ our Lord**

Reflection: Anyone with an interest in gardening will tell you that soil is important... ferns, heathers, rhododendrons, azaleas, foxgloves, lupins, camellias, magnolias and Japanese maples all do really well in acidic soil. Lily of the Valley, borage, lavender, honeysuckle and lilac tend to thrive in more alkali conditions. Hydrangeas are trickier because a more acidic soil seems to be best for blue blossom and alkali soil for pink, although I'm told this is not a hard-and-fast rule. The first section of our Gospel passage is often referred to as the parable of the sower but it could just as easily be called the parable of the seeds; however Jesus doesn't use either when He gives His explanation in the latter part of the reading; the emphasis is on the soil. The sower doesn't matter and the seed doesn't matter, what matters is where the seed lands because this will decide the future, the fate of the seed. The first surface the seed lands on is a path, hard compacted soil, dense, tightly packed, incapable of letting anything in and because this ground won't let anything in the seed is left isolated and alone, vulnerable to being eaten by a passing bird or blown away by the wind. These are the people who hear in that they're aware that Jesus is speaking but they don't hear what's being said, their hearts are as hard and as impenetrable as the path, their minds are too hostile to hear the good news. The next batch of seed falls on stony ground without much soil in which to take root. This is the area where the fickle people are, the erratic, the inconsistent, frivolous people who like the novelty and take it on at first but the root isn't deep enough to hold them and when something better comes along they follow that instead. On to the third lot of soil; not a hard pathway that won't let anything in, not stony rough terrain that lets the seed only scratch the surface but reasonably good soil, soil that will allow things to grow ... the problem being of course that where good seed can grow we can also get weeds. These are the people who hear and really want to listen and learn but life gets in the way. The world takes greater precedence, the striving for material things takes over. This is the person who wants to have their cake

and eat it. This is the reiteration of Matthew 6 v 24 “You cannot serve two masters at the same time... you will be loyal to one and not care about the other. You cannot serve God and money at the same time.” Now we come to the last, the good soil, full of nutrients with the right pH balance, this is where we want to be. Four types of soil, reflecting four types of people, four categories of hearts; the heart that hears God’s message but rejects it without a thought, the heart that hears but then changes its mind and retracts, the heart that hears the word of God but then gets side-tracked, letting other things take precedence and finally the heart that hears, listens, responds, receives, rejoices and lives it. We’re offered the seed, the word of God, His message, His love, His grace, His redemption and the promise of eternal life through Christ’s death and resurrection, all we have to do is accept it, let our hearts grow in His soil and try to be the people He wants us to be.

Poem: Good ground by Malcolm Guite

I love your simple story of the sower, with all its close attention to the soil,
Its movement from the knowledge to the knower, its take on the tenacity of toil.
I feel the fall of seed a sower scatters, so equally available to all,
Your story takes me straight to all that matters, Yet understands the reasons why I fall.
Oh deepen me where I am thin and shallow, uproot in me the thistle and the thorn,
Keep far from me that swiftly snatching shadow, that seizes on your seed to mock and scorn.
O break me open, Jesus, set me free, then find and keep your own good ground in me

Hymn StF 671 O multiply the sower’s seed, and fruit every hour we shall bear
What shall we offer our good Lord, poor nothings, for His boundless grace?
Fain would we His great name record and worthily set forth His praise.

Great object of our growing love, to whom our more than all we owe,
open the fountain from above, and let it our full souls o’erflow.

Open a door which earth and hell may strive to shut, but strive in vain;
let thy word richly in us dwell, and let our gracious fruit remain.

O multiply the sower’s seed! and fruit we every hour shall bear,
throughout the world thy gospel spread, thy everlasting truth declare.

So shall our lives thy power proclaim, thy grace for every sinner free,
till all the world shall learn thy name, shall all stretch out their hands to thee.

Prayers for the world: Loving God, Father Son and Holy Spirit We pray for our churches especially the people at St Andrews, for our Circuit and District and for our leaders. Strengthen those who are persecuted for their faith. Give them courage and endurance, protect them from harm, comfort them in their suffering and let them feel Your presence... Loving God, Father Son and Holy Spirit Grant wisdom and integrity, compassion and humility to those in positions of power and influence in our country and around the world; help them to make fair, just decisions and guide them to serve honestly and decently... Loving God, Father Son and Holy Spirit We lift up those who are sick and suffering, asking for Your healing touch. Restore their strength and bring comfort. Give strength to those who feel weak and weary; renew their energy and grant them the courage to keep going... Loving God, Father Son and Holy Spirit We pray for Your protection for people in danger, people held in slavery or where they are being abused, especially victims of abuse in their own home, in a place that’s supposed to be safe Guard them against harm and let Your presence be their shield. We pray that a way may be found to provide shelter, food and hope to the homeless and especially our armed forces veterans... Loving God, Father Son and Holy Spirit Be near those who are grieving and in

pain. Wrap them in Your arms and in Your love and bring them peace in their sorrow... Loving God, Father Son and Holy Spirit I place my family and friends into Your hands. Bless them with good health, peace, and happiness. Protect them from harm and guide them in Your ways. We ask these prayers in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ who taught us to pray:

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 those who 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.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen

Hymn: Christian love me more StF 250

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea;
Day by day his voice is sounding, Saying, "Christian, follow me."

As of old apostles heard it by the Galilean lake,
Turned from home, and toil, and kindred, leaving all for His dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us, Saying, "Christian, love me more."

In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,
Still he calls, in cares and pleasures, "Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us - by your mercies, Savior, may we hear your call,
Give our hearts to your obedience, Serve and love you best of all.

Prayers: Loving father as we end our time with You, may we believe and be saved, may we be rooted in Your love, may we prove to be fruitful in our worship of You and may we bring the harvest of Your word to everyone we meet. **The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious to us; the Lord lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace.**

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