

## **Sunday, July 12, 2020 Scoops #81 Liturgy and Sermon**

### **Our Readings:**

Genesis 25: 19-34 Psalm 119: 105-112 Romans 8: 1-11

**The Collect:** Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You. May we find peace in your service, and in the world to come, see You face to face, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **The Holy Gospel: Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>But as for what was sown on good soil,

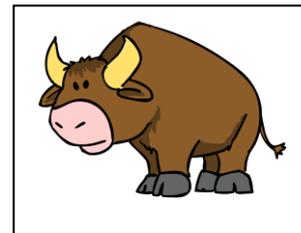
**this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”**

**Sermon:**

How often we pray “Thy Will be done...Thy Kingdom come”! Jesus placed that as the very first item we should pray about with our Father every single day. It is enormously important. Yet, when we look around our world, and when we look carefully at our own lives and hearts, we have to wonder whether our prayer makes much difference. For two thousand years, Christians have prayed that prayer, and taught and worked and struggled and often died in the process, yet the world remains a place where we see the Kingdom only in small glimpses. We see evil clearly...wars, and oppression, and terrorism, individual violence, corporate greed, destruction of our environment...it’s all there for everyone to see and mourn. The idea of a world in which God’s will is done, a world which is truly His Kingdom can seem as fanciful, with humour, as the old song “Home on the Range”.

That old song speaks about a place where there is only peace. Only comfort and joy. One day, some buffalo were grazing in that range, where the deer and the antelope were playing,

and a cowboy rode up. He jumped off his horse, banged his dusty hat on his knee and



shouted “ You are the most despicable

example of a buffalo I’ve ever seen. You’re dirty, you’re puny, you’re full of fleas.

You are just a disgusting buffalo”. And then he put on his hat, got back on his horse and rode off into the proverbial sunset. One buffalo looked at another

buffalo and said “ I think I’ve just heard a discouraging word!” We too can hear many discouraging words about the state of the Church in our world, about the fruitfulness of the Gospel in our society.

The Kingdom of God is wherever His will is perfectly done. We live in a time where the Kingdom is HERE, yet not fully here. That is what we pray for. And it can be discouraging. Yet it needn’t be. And if we are to be bold and courageous in our faith, it must not be. Jesus means to encourage us this morning, as He meant to encourage His disciples so many years ago, with the parable of the Sower.

We all know the story. A person sowing seeds goes out in the morning and scatters seed willy-nilly, everywhere, generously, without a care in the world about where it falls. And some of that seed is choked, some is carried away by birds, some dies through lack of water and good soil, but some ..some grows...and it grows astonishingly...producing huge crops. A farmer would be thrilled with a return of 10 bushels of corn for a bushel of seed. Jesus says that even the small proportion of seed which the sower scatters, even that small bit will produce 30 or 60 or 100 bushels of corn per bushel. An amazing return. Miraculous. Only God could do it!

Our efforts in our lives are not always measurable. We set our hearts and our minds to the will of God, and we seek His Spirit to fill our lives with love, and purity, and mercy, and forgiveness and kindness. Then we go out to act out those things, scattering our own seeds of the Will of God, the Kingdom of God. We sometimes see results, but more often we don’t see the actual harvest. A school teacher works with a troubled child, but may not know how the story ultimately

turns out. He or she plants a seed of love and concern, and prays that God will somehow make it make a difference. Sometimes just a word of encouragement to a person in need is remembered during a dark night and we never even know about it. We must not underestimate the power of a single seed.

Do you know that in 1959 there were under two million Christians in China, which then had a population approaching one billion. A tiny little seed. When China closed its doors to the outside world and expelled the missionary teachers, many people began to mentally bury the Chinese Church. They said that it would never survive. But in 1979, when China opened its doors once more, a wonderful thing had happened. The number of identifiable Christians had grown to over six million. The Chinese church had grown over 300% in just twenty years, twenty years of persecution and hardship. A huge harvest in fertile soil...hearts hungry for the Gospel of Christ. The Spirit brought abundant life in desperate circumstances indeed.

And so we must scatter our seeds. And live ourselves within the will of God as best we understand it, through Scripture and prayer and building each other up in the truth. We need to ask God to make our own hearts fertile soil so that His truth can grow in us.

For there is an inner field for each of us, where seed is scattered inside of **us**. In our spirit, our soul, our heart, our mind....whatever we call the place where the Holy Spirit works our freedom, our transformation and our healing. We are a changeable people. Sometimes our ears hear the Word of God, and we don't understand so we shake it off and it is lost. Sometimes, we hear and understand, but get distracted by worry and care and fear and grief, and the Truth has no

effect. Sometimes, we hear and understand and begin to live out the Truth, but then we neglect to feed our souls with the presence of God and the seed of Truth fails to thrive. Our efforts die out. But sometimes, thanks be to God, we hear and understand and live and nourish and scatter that seed to make a difference in just one life or perhaps in many, many lives. When that happens, we play our part in bringing the Kingdom of God, the will of God, to our world.

A young and honest Bible College student often prayed “ Thy Will be done”. Then more honestly, looking at the costs and sacrifices and consequences of God’s will actually being done in his own life, he prayed “ I want to will that Thy Will be done” and than even more honestly, searching his own soul, he prayed “ I want to want to will that Thy will be done”. And finally, in surrender, he just prayed “Help me, Lord”. And God helped him mightily, and **Billy Graham** went on to plant seeds that bear fruit all over our world. He couldn’t foresee the harvest, he just planted the seeds.

I recently came across a poster, and then found a plaque, bearing words which brought light to my own life and ministry. ( It is also Paul Ecclestone of St. Ambrose church’s favourite sign off message). Here are the words:

“Judge each day not be the harvest, but by the seeds you plant”. May God help us to scatter generously, and trust the harvest to His provision, love and mercy. Amen.

**Prayer for the Day:** ( hymn prayer from Songs for a Gospel People,# 82)

Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me,  
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unlock and set me free!

Silently now I wait for Thee, ready my god thy will to see;

Open my eyes illumine me, Spirit Divine.

Open my ears that I may hear voices of truth thou sendest clear,

And while the wavenotes fall on my ear, everything else shall disappear....

Silently now I wait for thee, ready my God thy will to see

Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit Divine!

Open my mouth and let me bear, gladly the warm truth everywhere

Open my heart and let me prepare love with thy children thus to share...

Silently now I wait for thee, ready my God thy will to see,

Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

**Benediction:**

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always, Amen!



Blessings! - Judie+