Lord, may this time of worship be to us like a seed planted in good soil, settling down, at home. As we are embraced in your care, cause us to be fruitful in joy and to grow in grace.



‘Be still and know that I am God’: Become aware of God’s presence with you.

**In these strange times, we come to the unchanging God who is ever creating, and who, out of chaos and the human scene, works his wonderful plans. As we worship today and this coming week we can trust God with everything. It might be messy and mixed, but it is all under God’s control.**

**We come to God through his Word and in the Spirit, and today the bible readings describe the process of sowing and fruitfulness.**

[**Isaiah 55:10-13**](http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/niv/isaiah/55/) As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."

[**Matthew 13:1-9**](http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/niv/matthew/13/)**, and 23** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop-a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear."…..

And Jesus provides an explanation:

***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.”***

Take a moment - what takes your attention in these readings? Jesus used parables, teaching by words and pictures.

***The Lord’s Prayer***

*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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever*

**The parable of the sower**

 A pulpit in a boat and a congregation on the shore. Jesus knows how to use what’s in the neighbourhood, and what’s available – for maximum effect. What a lesson there! With the hills coming down to the shore, Jesus’ voice would have carried loud and clear.

Jesus is the King and Head of the church: who knows how imperfect, mixed up, and crazy, is the world in which we live… and how mixed up we are. No surprise then that Jesus got a mixed response to his teaching in his day, and it is no different in ours. There is something comforting and realistic in that for us.

We all know from experience that the same words spoken to different people have different effects. We all have our own ways of ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ things. Chapters 11 and 12 of Matthew’s gospel, show how this was working out in Jesus’ day. Instead of people welcoming John the Baptist – he was put in prison, the folk in Jesus’ own area were mainly rejecting him, the Pharisees were angry, and his own family couldn’t take it in. But there was nothing wrong with the sowing that Jesus was doing, quite the contrary, it would bring its harvest in time.

So it’s in that context of reality, that Jesus preaches this parable (and the other 7) in this chapter: saying: folks, this is the way it is in the kingdom: it’s not a simple cause and effect: fruitfulness churned out in a machine: with a rigid stock control process: a perfectionist’s dream. Understanding this, we’ll know what’s going on, as we as church go out and sow the message of Jesus: *using what’s available and in the neighbourhood here.*

The good news is to be scattered to all, because we do not know in the here and now, where the harvest will be. So get the word out, says Jesus. Just do it: sow in the neighbourhood, and with what’s available: and let the word bring its own harvest. Extravagant, even reckless spreading is to be the order of the day. See the seed flying out of the thrower’s hand, and landing all over the place, and then doing what it does. And we can leave it to God to do the rest. And the harvest is sure: it’s not ultimately about what doesn’t work- it’s about what does.

***Our prayers***

 Lord God, the giver of every good and perfect gift

 Hear and see us as we come to you today.

We throw ourselves into the good soil of your care

Relying on your mercy and grace to root us

And you receive us, as we are,

Your soil receives us always.

Its warmth, its nutrients, come to us, breaking us down in a good way, and then working away, underground

Without fuss, in the silence: in you we have rest and growth.

Father, forgive us. We see some flaws, but not all

Stony ground, trampled down byways, unreceptive:

Often shallow: prone to distractions.

*Lord, in our lives, may your kingdom come, your will be done*
And for our nation at this important and uncertain time: for growth in our common life
in place of strife and division, unity of purpose, a building up
And a coming together, of rich and poor, young and old: good fruit and flourishing lives

We remember today all those who are in hard paths, and rocky places, feeling crushed, struggling, downtrodden. For those in poverty and want, perplexed and sad.

*Lord, in such lives and places, your kingdom come, your will be done*
That your kingdom may grow in the church
That those who scatter the good seed would cast out
On left and right, behind and before, virtual planting, online, zooming or facetiming or by phone, praying, trusting, hoping, being kind and caring,
And with joy throw out the living Word, bringing harvests.

For all those persecuted for your sake, O God
In the fierce heat of oppression and mocking and violence
Give them perseverance when the going gets tough
And an assurance of their sure reward

Loving God, we give thanks for the joy of home and family.

For the companionship and chat of neighbours
For the things that give us fulfilment, a laugh,
Strength, and hope: in good times and in bad.
Lord as we continue this journey into the new normal, give us a sense of perspective, kindness and of patience, in all our thoughts, words and actions.

God of all comfort, we pray for all who are not well, in mind or in body
Who are walking in a shadow life, feeling dull and disorientated,
And for those around them. Be with those who mourn, and those close to death.

Lord, hear our silent prayers....
In all our prayers today, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Amen



**Blessing**

Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father. Set out then on a new life with Christ. And the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, Amen

**Reflections for the week**

Have a look again at the first picture of the seeds in the hand, and then at the picture above of the harvest. Have a think about that growing process as it applies to you. What can you do to help it along? Jot down some thoughts if you like.

‘Lord, inspire us to live in such a way, and commit to live in a positive way, that the ordinariness of daily life may be transformed into something extraordinary’.

**An evening prayer**

O Lord my God, thank you for bringing this day to a close. Thank you for giving us all that we need for body and soul. Your hand has been over us and has guarded and preserved us. Forgive our lack of faith and any wrong that we have done today, and help us to forgive all who have wronged us. Let us sleep in peace under your protection. Into your hands we commend our loved ones: your holy name be praised. Amen