

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, JULY 12th, 2020**

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Fenwick

God has given to each one of us the chance to tell others about God's love and how much strength and courage it gives us every day. I want you to think about being seed-scatterers of God's love today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Welcome to the seed-scattering station!
You might ask...what so you mean "seed-scattering station"?
Well, we are called to be the church, a place where the loving, redeeming word of God is shared.
So, Open your hearts and lives, dear friends, for God's word for you.
Listen and be refreshed. For some of you it has been a difficult week.
For some, things have flowed along nicely.
Open your hearts, let God's love fill you up and live in that love!
And with open hearts and minds we all can spread the seeds of love, kindness, gentleness to everyone we meet.
For we all are Seed scatters!

OPENING HYMN: Trust and Obey

1 When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way;
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

2

**Refrain: Trust and obey,
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.**

2 Not a shadow can rise,
Not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear,
Not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

3 Not a burden we bear,
Not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss,
Not a frown or a cross,
But is blest if we trust and obey.

4 But we never can prove
The delights of His love,
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

5 Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do;
Where He sends, we will go,
Never fear, only trust and obey.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, you know us so well. We thank you for your presence in our lives, even when we don't recognize it. This day we have gathered, coming from a week of unexpected happenings and events which have surprised us. Make us ready to become stronger witnesses for your love as we receive your word, listen to your message, are uplifted by the music or the words of the hymns and find our spirits and lives renewed and refreshed for another week ahead. AMEN.

CHILDREN'S STORY**CHILDREN'S SONG****MORNING PRAYER**

God who plants seeds of hope and justice within our lives, we are so grateful for this community of faith and for all, anywhere, who hunger and thirst for your healing, reconciling word. You know all the things that are on our hearts today and you bring us together in love and support. We ask your healing mercies with those who struggle with illness of every kind, with feeling lost and marginalized; for those who mourn and for whom the darkness of sorrow enshrouds them. We ask your growth-producing love for all those who celebrate and rejoice today. Be with each one of us and all those whom we have named in our hearts before you. Help us to reach out to each other in compassion and support, for we ask these things in Jesus' name. AMEN.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalms 119:105-112 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

nuN :

- ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.
- ¹⁰⁶ I have taken an oath and confirmed it,
that I will follow your righteous laws.
- ¹⁰⁷ I have suffered much;
preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.
- ¹⁰⁸ Accept, LORD, the willing praise of my mouth,
and teach me your laws.
- ¹⁰⁹ Though I constantly take my life in my hands,
I will not forget your law.
- ¹¹⁰ The wicked have set a snare for me,
but I have not strayed from your precepts.
- ¹¹¹ Your statutes are my heritage for ever;
they are the joy of my heart.
- ¹¹² My heart is set on keeping your decrees
to the very end.^[a]
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Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23 New International Version

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 round 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.'

Matthew 13:18-23 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

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.'

MESSAGE

Today's gospel makes me think about the ground on which Jesus has walked.

I suspect Jesus often walked the hard packed path of prejudice, a path where not much grows, where life and opportunities are too quickly snatched away. I'll bet he knew what it was like to live between a rock and hard place. On the rocky ground life withers because you can't put down roots. There's no security or stability and the sun scorches. He surely walked amongst the thorns of violence, fear, anger, and poverty. We know this from the words of the New Testament

So, I feel when Jesus told this parable that he was reflecting not only the experiences of those met but his own experiences. We all know the different landscapes of which Jesus speaks. We know the beaten path of life. We've stumbled through the rocky patches of life. We have been scratched and cut by the thorns of life. And we have planted our roots deep in the sacred soil of life

that feeds and grows us to become a harvest, in one case, a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

Jesus is not just describing different types of soil or circumstances of life. He is describing our inner geography. These are the various landscapes of the human heart. We have met these in others and discovered them in ourselves. We are rarely just one type of soil. We are all four. The four soils are descriptive of how we live and relate to others and to God. Jesus' interpretation of the parable, when he tells what happens to the seeds, describes the consequences of each kind of life.

I have known lots of people who are thrown onto heavily traveled paths where they do not even have a chance because they are picked at or trampled on right away. Others are cast into the shallow soil on top of rock where they have little hope to spread their roots and get firmly established. Usually, they are blown away with the gentlest of breezes. Others are always winding up in the thorns, and I think we all know

what life is like when the thorns are trying to tear you away from your good soil. There are all these people that I know who are good people, but they just can not seem to get a break. Why did God cast them into such rough conditions?

Yet, at the same time, there are those who seem to find the good soil anywhere they go. You know these people.

So, as we look at the parable I ask you one obvious question. What kind of dirt are you?

We tend to read and try to understand parables through the lens of our world and worldview. The result is that we hear but do not understand, we see but do not perceive. The parable does not make sense. A farmer goes out and sows seed on a public pathway, on rocky ground, and amongst the thorns. That is simply wasteful, inefficient, and ineffective. It's bad farming. The sower is not much of a farmer. You can't plant seeds among the rocks and thorns or on a path and then act surprised or complain that nothing grew. To know that is the beginning of understanding this parable.

Parables offer a different perspective. They give us a glimpse into God's world and what God is like. Parables are not meant to test human intelligence. They are to open us up to the grace that test our heart's willingness to surrender to and be enveloped in the always surprising generosity of God. The surprising generosity of God is exactly what the parable of the sower reveals.

As different as the four soils are they all hold two things in common. Seeds and the sower. The sower sows the same seeds in all four soils with equal toil, equal hope, and equal generosity. The sower does so without evaluation of the soil's quality or potential. There is no soil left unsown. No ground is declared undeserving of the sower's seeds. This is not about the quality of dirt. It's about the quality of God, the divine sower. We want to judge what kind of dirt we are. God simply wants to sow his life in ours. Whether we produce forty cents a day from our soil or \$400 a day soil we are sown with the seeds of God. No life, no person, no soil is left unsown.

Seeds here. Seeds there. Seeds everywhere. That just seems like poor planning. By today's farming practices it is inefficient.

Thankfully this parable is about God's faithfulness and not about farming, soil quality, or how things work in this world. In the sower's world wastefulness gives way to hope, inefficiency to love, and

profitability to generosity. Every part of your life has been sown with the seeds of God and you know what happens to seeds. So, continue to sow seeds of love, hope, and kindness to everyone you meet.

HYMN: #299 Teach Me, God, to Wonder

- 1 Teach me, God, to wonder, teach me, God, to see;
let your world of beauty capture me.
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,
life be celebrated, joy you give.
- 2 Let me, God, be open, let me loving be;
let your world of people speak to me. R
- 3 Let me, God, be ready, let me be awake,
in your world of loving my place take. R
- 4 Teach me, God, to know you, hear you when you speak,
see you in my neighbour when we meet. R

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

LORD’S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: God Sees the Little Sparrow Fall (enjoy this old hymn)

God sees the little sparrow fall,
It meets His tender view;
If God so loves the little birds,
I know He loves me, too.

Refrain

**He loves me, too, He loves me, too,
I know He loves me, too;
Because He loves the little things,
I know He loves me, too.**

He paints the lily of the field,
Perfumes each lily bell;
If He so loves the little flow’rs,
I know He loves me well.

Refrain

God made the little birds and flow’rs,
And all things large and small;
He’ll not forget his little ones,
I know He loves them all.

Refrain

SENDING FORTH

As you have received the seeds of faith and hope; go now into God’s world to scatter the seeds of reconciliation and peace, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

CHORAL AMEN

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