

Sunday 12th July 2020

**Preacher: Reverend Jane Quinton
Curate**

TRINITY 5 – Matthew 13:1-9,18-23 – ‘Sowing the seeds of love’



One of the objectives of preaching is to be relevant – to speak into the time and place in which we live. And so in the midst of these particularly exceptional times, as I looked at the gospel reading for today, and I read these words written 2000 years ago, I immediately thought ‘BOURNEMOUTH’!
And I’ll give you a few seconds to see if you can make the connection ?!

Admittedly this is the story where Jesus tells the parable of the sower, sowing his seed across different types of ground..... But in the opening sentences we are told that Jesus is on a crowded beach - so crowded that He has to go and sit in a boat in order to talk to the people properly.

And now you may have made the connection!

Because as I pictured the scene in which Jesus found Himself, I was instantly reminded of all those images I’d seen of crowded beaches across England as

lock-down was eased a few weeks ago, with the beach at Bournemouth being the first image I actually saw.

Indeed, after having been cooped up indoors for weeks, as soon as restrictions on travel were eased, people flocked to the beaches, eager to get out, excited at the thought of some new space to go. And it was lovely to see people obviously happy and enjoying this much awaited 'freedom'.

Not everybody was happy though – many people were scared of the consequences of what this might mean, as they saw people getting far too close to each other whilst others were upset at the lack of respect and sense of responsibility of some who had left rubbish strewn all over the place....(as well as other things!)

But it made me wonder about the people who were on the beach in our gospel reading? Why had *they* gathered there in such large numbers on this day? Well ultimately it was because of Jesus – their sense of curiosity over this young carpenter who had been building a bit of a reputation over the past few months, particularly for his healing powers – healing those who had been born deaf or blind, those who were lepers or who had illnesses of the mind, and most miraculously even bringing back to life those who had died!

But Jesus had also become known for his radical teaching, that talked of a new way of living where people were encouraged to forgive and to love even their enemies....

Indeed, what He had been doing and saying had greatly upset the local religious leaders and teachers.

And so on this particular day a multitude of people had left their homes and probably travelled many miles on foot, to see Jesus and hear what He had to say.....

And He begins by telling them to 'Listen'.. possibly because with so many people there it would have been very noisy, but more likely it was because what he had to say was important..... and He wanted their attention

And so He then proceeds to tell them a parable about a sower sowing his seed across different types of ground... He uses this image to help them relate to and understand His message.

And I'd like to add a song to that image today, to further help enforce Jesus's message for us – it's a song by Tears for Fears, called “**Sowing the seeds of love**” (music)

(I just want that tune and those words of the chorus to hopefully remain with you now!)

Because as Jesus explains in more detail to the disciples afterwards, what is being sown are seeds of love ...

Love is the essence of who Jesus is and of what He spoke and revealed.....
It is a love that is unconditional, faithful and selfless.... a love that forgives, that puts others first, and sees the best in others..... a love that is generous, kind, compassionate and non-judgemental....and that treats everyone equally.
It is a love that heals and transforms.

But, as Jesus illustrates in the parable of the sower, and as any farmer or gardener will know, the growth of this and any seed is dependent upon the ground on which it falls..... and that is the heart of Jesus's message - literally!
Because where the first seed falls on the path this represents an **unresponsive heart** – a heart that hears Jesus's words but is not interested – maybe because of prejudice or pride or fear, the seed falls on deaf ears and has no impact.

The rocky ground represents the **impulsive heart**, that initially receives Jesus's words with joy, but then falls away when things get difficult.

The soil among the thorns represents the **preoccupied or distracted heart** that ends up choked by the cares of the world and/or the lure of wealth.

Whilst the good soil represents the **open and faithful heart**, the heart that hears and accepts Jesus's words and allows God's love to take root, permeate, and grow, consequently producing a harvest of love itself.

Jesus is the sower of love, and He continues to call to each one of us, every day, asking us to 'listen', and to be part of that transforming, life-changing harvest.

Just like the people who came to hear Jesus on the beach over 2000 years ago, so there will be people listening around the world today who are intrigued..... who want to know more about Jesus..... Who have heard something about

Him, because they have tuned into online services over the past few weeks maybe or perhaps they've seen lives dramatically changed because of Him..... there will be people who are wondering whether He is who says He is, and whether He does really love them despite all they may have done....

Indeed, just as Jesus called to the crowd then, so He continues to call to all of us today: 'Listen!'.....

And as the disciple Peter and so many since have recognised and acknowledged, Jesus has the words of eternal life, and He offers a life in which love is the seed being sown and love is the fruit that is growing.....

But are we listening?

And do we want to hear and welcome the power of this seed to transform our lives, and that of the world?

AMEN