

Emmanuel Wave Video

Welcome and notices

State of play

Emmanuel wave – thank you again..

Birthdays – celebrated her birthday on Friday

Call to worship

We all love a good story;

we can't wait to hear how it ends.

Come and worship the Lord God, author of our stories –
each one so different,

but if properly rooted in God, they can be amazing.

Come and hear God's story for us today,
and make it part of your story.

Amen.

Praise: God is working his purpose out

1 God is working his purpose out,
as year succeeds to year:

God is working his purpose out,
and the time is drawing near:
nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled
with the glory of God,
as the waters cover the sea.

2 From utmost east to utmost west,
wherever foot has trod,
by the mouth of many messengers
rings out the voice of God:
Listen to me you continents,
you islands look to me,
that the earth may be filled
with the glory of God,
as the waters cover the sea.

3 We shall march in the strength of God,
with the banner of Christ unfurled,
that the light of the glorious gospel of truth
may shine throughout the world;
we shall fight with sorrow and sin
to set their captives free,
that the earth may be filled
with the glory of God,
as the waters cover the sea.

4 All we can do is nothing worth
unless God blesses the deed;
vainly we hope for the harvest-tide
till God gives life to the seed:
nearer and nearer draws the time,

the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled
with the glory of God,
as the waters cover the sea.

Video reading: Matthew 13:1 – 9; 18 – 23

All Age talk

Over the next 3 weeks we are going to be hearing about stories that Jesus told – his parables. As Janine read for us, this morning's story is the parable of the sower. Jesus made use of familiar situations and objects that were around and that people could relate to.

The aim of his parables was to try and get his hearers to listen very carefully to what he was saying, because there was often a hidden meaning behind most of the them. Sometimes he would explain the message to his hearers, and other times it wasn't spelt out.

Sharon has prepared a sound quiz for us this morning. We are going to have to do some careful listening ourselves. Some sounds are going to be easy to recognise, but there will be some we might not be able to identify straight away.

Video Sound Quiz

Praise: Seed Sower

Prayer

Lord, it is so good to read your Word,
and hear the parables you told.
But, Lord, we can't leave it there.
We must take note of the explanation,
and work it out in our own lives.
Help us, O Lord, to listen, to learn and to act..

For the times we dash haphazardly into your presence,
finding it hard to leave behind our cares and worries:
forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times when we don't learn from our experiences:
forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times when we don't take care of ourselves,
or the people we share our lives with:
forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times we don't see what you want us to see
and just take things at face value:
forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

For the times when we want our seed planted in neat rows,
when our own plans become more important than yours,
rather than letting the Holy Spirit prepare the soil of our lives
and blow where the Spirit wants to:
forgive us, good Lord, and make us new.

Gracious God,
we thank you that all good gifts come from you.
We thank you for all you have already given us.
And, as the good soil welcomes the seed,
and causes it to grow,
we welcome you to take root and flourish in our lives.
Amen.

Offering/Prayer

Message: Sowing and sowing ...

I must confess that I am not an expert in things horticultural, but the keen gardeners in our congregation will know all about what it is to have plants growing from seed, nurturing them as seedlings in a greenhouse, before picking just the right time to plant them in pots before reaching their final destination in the garden bed.

The parable of the sower is a familiar one to most of us. The sower throws seed on the packed ground of a footpath, then ground full of rocks, ground that is thick with thorns, and finally on good fertile ground. Depending on where they land they either are eaten by birds, wither or get choked, while some take root.

We know that Jesus loved telling parables, because parables make us ask questions about our relationship with God and the world he has created. This is one of those stories, because it is ultimately a story about the kind of ground I am on with God. How many birds are in my field, how many rocks, how many thorns. How am I going to even try and get them cleaned up and removed, and how can I get myself made into the kind of soil that God requires?

Yes, this is the usual response to this parable – a challenge to be different, a call to improve our lives. It's all about soil, and I have to make sure mine is the best quality – right? But maybe there's more to this parable than meets the eye.

What if it is not about us at all but about the sower? What if it is not about our own successes and birds and rocks and thorns but about the extravagance of a sower who doesn't seem to be fazed by such concerns?

When we look at the landscape around us we very quickly discover something – this God of ours just lavishly scatters seeds. He throws seeds all around. There are God seeds just everywhere. Some will grow and some will not, but God just keeps scattering, blowing dandelions, planting seeds in places that we least expect. God isn't stingy in any way.

God doesn't assess our worthiness before God scatters his seeds of love, grace, and mercy. God throws them all around. I wonder if we shouldn't be a little more like that. We judge the soil, prepare the soil, alter the soil. We dig, fertilize, and water, and then if the timing is right and the weather is favourable we gingerly place the seed in the ground. And then we take a great deal of pride in whatever harvest we get.

But God doesn't garden like that. God lavishly, foolishly, wastefully throws the seed of Word, grace, mercy, love, everywhere. Miraculously, the results God gets, the harvest God produces is tremendous. In Jesus' day a farmer, on a good year might expect a four or five fold return, but Jesus says the return from God's method is thirty, sixty, one hundred fold—a mind blowing harvest that would more than provide for the farmer and his family.

How can that possibly work? This parable seems to suggest an alternative.

I wonder if we should try God's way of planting for a change. I wonder if we shouldn't just throw around some seeds of mercy, grace, and love even if the soil doesn't appear to be that receptive to them. I wonder if by exercising generosity with our resources, letting go of what's mine a bit more might make a difference to walking the way of Jesus?

I wonder if we might not be surprised by the harvest, its bounty and location. No doubt birds will eat some and thorns choke others but maybe that is not our concern.

Maybe we should just keep on lavishly, foolishly, wastefully, even, scattering the seed of God's word...seeds that contain the makings of good news and forgiveness...seeds that will inevitably produce a huge harvest...seeds that will change the look and feel and shape of the whole landscape once they take root... seeds that have the potential to feed the masses...seeds that will ultimately make beautiful the most desolate of places.

God scatters these seeds...everywhere, and maybe we should, too.

I have this image of God blowing puffy dandelions, thrilled as they float and land and take root and spread in the most unexpected places, just weeds to many but treasured flowers to little children and others foolish enough to take notice of them—foolish enough to pick them and give them away—foolish enough to make wishes and blow them in the wind.

God doesn't judge the state of the soil, its worthiness or potential, God just lavishly, foolishly, wastefully scatters the seeds of God's grace, mercy, and love, delighting in giving them away because God knows the harvest will be awesome, mind blowing. God knows that it will change the whole landscape.

God knows that those seeds will take root and make beautiful the most unexpected places ...thriving despite birds and rocks and thorns...implanting in people's hearts and producing fruit in even the most barren of places.

This is the way our generous Sower, God the Father operates in the world he has created. And I think his way of operating might be the way he would want us to follow. Just think what an impact sharing those seeds of grace, mercy, forgiveness and love might have on those around you.

Maybe that's how the early church grew from strength to strength. Maybe, just maybe it's time that happened again!

Praise: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

1. Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper rev'rence, praise.
2. O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!
3. Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.
4. Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;

Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small Voice of calm.

5. In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow Thee.

Prayers of Intercession

The seed of Your kingdom is forever being sown
into our lives, our world, O God.
But it doesn't always take root.
Sometimes it fails to find a place to grow.

And so we pray...
For ourselves and others when life makes us hard and resistant
like a well-trodden path
where old habits, old systems and old patterns of thinking
keep your message from growing;

For ourselves and others when we become so immersed
in the short-lived, shallow, rock-hiding soil of the moment
where Your life too easily gets blown away by the wind;

For ourselves and others when our fears, insecurities,
desires and self-absorption
tangle like thorns around Your grace
and choke it into silence;

For ourselves and others when Your truth brings out the best in us
and we grow fruitful in compassion and justice
in service and worship.

The seed of Your kingdom is forever being sown
into our lives and our world, O God;
May it find good soil, may it grow
and may it produce a harvest of life, peace, joy and love
in us and across the globe.
Amen.

Sending out:

Lord God, the world awaits us with all its troubles and uncertainties – but also with its
opportunities. Send us out now, in your name, to look consciously for ways of seeing you in the
world around, and to act accordingly.

Praise: Amazing Grace