

14 July 2020 - Sermon - Chris Leverton

I think it was good to listen to what Canon Christine had to say this morning particularly because the diocese has made the sermon available and it's good to make use of them. bAnd it saves me a little bit of work.

I enjoyed very much the illustration of ourselves being the soil which needs to be prepared before we can confidently sow then harvest a crop. And as we know that takes time and it takes hard work.

I recall just in the drought period during the early part of the lockdown that it was quite a task to keep the plants in the garden watered. Judy and I were saving our shower water try not to trip over the bucket in the bath. We were doing what we could to keep the garden watered and the plants growing without emptying Ladybower reservoir or wherever the water comes from in Rotherham. And it was hard work lugging buckets through the house trying not to spill them on the way.

But I'm glad to say that those plants that were looking a little bit withered are now in full bloom. Over a period of time I am sure that we will work the soil digging plenty of organic material and perhaps make it less likely to dry out when the rains do not come.

When it comes down to how we share our faith our preparation is a little different. We must remember that we are spiritual people. As the diocesan vision prayer says we are strengthened by the holy spirit. We are not on our own when it comes to preparing our spiritual soil so that we can be effective in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life. How do we do that? Well I think possibly we all know the answer to that question but the difficulty is finding that time to wait on God, to read his word, to pray, to meet together and thoroughly prepare ourselves for the mission at hand.

Unfortunately our world is full of distractions and if you are like me we often find ourselves sidelined by the things that are enjoyable but perhaps do not help our spiritual growth. Things like maybe TV, social networking, shopping (not the essential type) and all those general things that we find we put before God. I'm not being critical, it's acknowledging that there are so many ways in which we can be distracted in today's world.

It's nothing new. There is an example, in the Old Testament we read in Genesis 25 of Esau giving up his birthright for a bowl of stew. He was demonstrating that he was more fleshly than spiritual. He didn't see the big picture and at that moment filling his belly with a tasty stew was more important than thinking about his future.

And as we think about preparing our soil and, whether that is ourselves or whether it is perhaps nurturing those people with whom we come into contact, we also need to think about the other aspect of the seed. That seed being the word of God in essence, which is good seed indeed. But the fact remains that if we don't sell it then nothing grows.

If we look at the verses in Romans 8:1-11, and that is a good place to start pondering how we prepare ourselves, then we read that we do not need to be afraid of what it means to share the gospel. We do not to be more considerate ourselves to be inadequate or unworthy because there really is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. And that is a spiritual thing. If we dwell in Christ we can be more like him and that ultimately is how we can be much more effective in our evangelism and in a sharing in God's mission here on earth.

So as we consider again this well known parable of the sower, we can ask ourselves how can we be good soil and how can we continue to sow in a way that is effective and leads to the growth of the church in its broadest sense.