



By Revd David Reast

Call To Worship—Isaiah 55:10-13

¹⁰ 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,
¹¹ 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.
¹² 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.
¹³ Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.
This will be for the LORD's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure forever"

Hymn O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing

<https://youtu.be/2e475ww32Jg>

O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES to sing

My great Redeemer's praise,
My great Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

See all your sins on Jesus laid;
The Lamb of God was slain,
The Lamb of God was slain;
His soul was once an offering made
For every soul of man.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

He speaks and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
And leap, ye lame, for joy!

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honours of Thy name.

Prayer:

Father God we thank you for your word. We thank you that you are a god who reveals yourself to us, in the power and glory of creation, in the truths and challenges of scripture, and supremely through the nature, character and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you that you have spoken to us through your Holy Spirit and we have found the joy of hearing you, knowing you and following you.

Speak to us afresh this morning, that our hearts may be warmed by your presence, and that we may be encouraged to share your love and grace afresh with all whom we meet.

In Christ's name, Amen

Song; Lord you sometimes speak in wonders.

https://youtu.be/KWj_6zB248Q

1 Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders
unmistakable and clear;
mighty signs to prove your presence,
overcoming doubt and fear

2 Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers,
still and small and scarcely heard;
only those who want to listen
catch the all-important word.

3 Lord, you sometimes speak in silence,
through our loud and noisy day:
we can know and trust you better
when we quietly wait and pray.

4 Lord, you love to speak in Scripture:
words that summon from the page,
shown and taught us by your Spirit
with fresh light for every age.

5 Lord, you always speak in Jesus,
always new yet still the same;
teach us now more of our Saviour;
make our lives display his Name.

One of the great joys that Lynne and I have shared over the last few months has been our garden. We have taken great pleasure in the natural world and that despite the lockdown, the cycle of nature has continued, with all the wonders of spring and early summer, but I have missed my walking group, with the walks round University park, Attenborough, and along the river or canal side. Our reading this morning reminds us that Jesus often took inspiration from the natural world, and the everyday scenes of life; in this case a farmer sowing his wheat:-

Matthew 13 : 1-9

The Parable of the Sower

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around 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



The thing I noticed straight away with this passage is how generous the farmer is with his seed. He sows it widely, confident that although some will be eaten by birds or struggle to grow, he will still reap a harvest. God's word is for everyone, whatever we may make of it, and God's promises, we read in Isaiah at the start of the service, reminds us that His Word will never return to him empty. Jesus often found it was the most unlikely of people who responded most readily to his teaching, but he was generous with his time and love with everyone. And Jesus promises elsewhere that wherever he finds faith, however faltering, he will nurture and protect it.

We can easily be discouraged if we pray for someone or share God's love with them for a long time and see little or no signs of response, but Jesus encourages us not to lose heart. No one can respond unless someone tells them of the goodness and grace of God (Romans 10:14), and we should always be ready to give an account of hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15). The sheer joy of seeing someone suddenly make sense of God's love after years of prayerful encouragement is immense.

But Jesus when he interprets the parable looks not at the sower but at the soil.

Matthew 13:18-23 New International Version (NIV)



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."

We can recognise these responses from Jesus ministry. The religious leaders who refused to listen to Jesus message, The crowds quick to respond and quick to cry "Crucify". The rich young ruler who could not part with his possessions is a great example of how the cares of this world can crowd out Gods message and hinder us from bearing the fruit God desires. Even the disciples had very mixed responses, yet Jesus love went out to them all.

At the start of Lockdown I had great plans to use the time to read the bible and pray more, but somehow life still got in the way.

Our gardener has returned recently and I have been intrigued how he prepares the soil for planting, with drainage and fertiliser. Earlier in the year he pruned our apple tree so that it will grow better fruit. Sometimes we have to work hard to make space for God in our lives, receiving and nurturing his word, so that our lives are full of the fruits of God's spirit, love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.



Song : Thy word is a lamp unto my feet

<https://youtu.be/npWJZwgmKMo>

Thy Word

Is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path

When I feel afraid
Think I've lost my way
Still You're there
Right beside me

Nothing will I fear
As long as You are near
Please be near me to the end

Thy Word is...
Is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path

Thy Word
Is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path

I will not forget
Your love for me and yet
My heart forever is wandering

Jesus be my guide

And hold me to Your side
And I will love You to the end

Nothing will I fear
As long as You are near
Please be near me to the end

Thy Word

Is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path

Thy Word

Is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path

And a light unto my path
You're the light unto my path

Prayer

Start by thanking God for those who have prayed for us or shown us God's love and grace in recent days.

Then thank God for answers to prayer we have seen.

Now let us remember those who we want to encourage or see grow in God's grace, especially those for whom we have prayed over a long time.

Let us pray for our society as we begin to rebuild life, especially those for whom this is a time of anxiety and fear.

Let us pray for the Church and our leaders as we seek God's way forward for us all.

Amen

