

## **The Rhythms of Life – a reflection for Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July based on Matt 13:1-9; 18-23**

There are so many aspects to today's gospel reading on the parable of the sower aren't there and as with all scripture, the circumstances we find ourselves in will influence the message that jumps out at us. For the team putting this service together today, it was the wonder of creation and the phrase that came to me was the rhythm of life.

What comfort there is in knowing that whatever is going on in the world, the rhythm of life continues – night follows day, the planets move continually in their orbits, the seasons follow on in the same order, God remains faithful and steadfast.

I wonder what strategies you put in place to get you through lockdown, what were the little things that kept you going and gave you hope.... It was well documented in those early days how daily routines were vital to our mental well-being and also that people were much more aware of nature. We had a glorious spring... or maybe it seemed that way because we had the time to notice. Those who weren't shielding made good use of the allowed daily walk – making the most of every precious minute and taking in all the sights and smells around us. Maybe you discovered walks you hadn't done before or rediscovered the delights on your doorstep. Then, after the first easing of lockdown, we were allowed to get in our cars and go further afield for our walk and rediscover more places still – and didn't it seem exciting!

We spent a lot of time in our gardens tending our plants, growing things we hadn't tried before, redesigning, and finding great pleasure in watching things grow. We knew how important it was to keep careful watch – to water and weed regularly. And we had time to do it.

But what now? We're all getting busier as some sort of normality begins to resume. Are we still giving our gardens as much TLC? Or do they get a more cursory overhaul when we have a bit of spare time?

Let's think about the message in our gospel reading this morning, the parable of the sower. We all know the way it goes... we need to keep our hearts in good condition to not just hear the word of God, but nurture it, meditate on it, let it grow within us so that we can share God's love further. With our gardens, we know that as soon as we turn our back, our carefully prepared plot starts to be overtaken by weeds that seem to grow twice as quickly as the flowers or crops we've planted. If we don't act, the weeds will choke everything else in the garden. So it is with our hearts. We can do all the right things – pray, stay alert (the phrase of the moment) but if we allow ourselves to get distracted by cares and worries our carefully prepared hearts become overrun with weeds and we struggle to see what is really important.

Tending our hearts needs to be an integral part of the rhythm of our lives, no matter what else is going on. Taking time to pray, to meditate on scripture in whatever way works for us, will help us to keep life in perspective. As we struggle with all the changes to the rhythm of our lives, try to make sense of what we can and can't do, write risk assessments and procedures that seem to throw up more questions than answers, let's remember those for whom the prospect of leaving their home for the first time in months feels like the greatest risk they've ever taken. Let's remember those who have been bereaved, those who struggle with their mental health, those for whom a daily walk or trip to the shops can feel like climbing a mountain. Let's stay alert and keep our hearts well-tended so that we notice those who struggle and do something about it – even if it's a reassuring smile to the stranger in the shop who seems lost and unsure. The rhythm of their life may have been totally disrupted.

If you have a mountain to climb, if the rhythm of your life has been thrown totally out of sync, I trust that the music this morning will go a small way to reassuring you that there is still stability to be found in the wonder of nature with the patterns created by a loving God who never changes and will always be there for us... no matter what.

Hazel