



Circuit Contact

Welcome to our Circuit Worship for

16th June 2024

prepared by Ms Jo Powell

Worship in the following locations:

Wellspring Cheadle - at 10:30am with Rev David Willis - Holy Communion

Endon Methodist Church - at 10.00am with Rev Eleanor Smith

Ipstones Methodist Church - at 10.30am with Rev Julie Hassall - Holy Communion

Onecote Methodist Church - at 11.00am by LA

Rudyard Methodist Church - at 11.00am with Deacon Peter Ogle

St Andrews Cheddleton - at 10.30am with Rev Helen Kirk

The Gathering at St. Andrews, Cheddleton - at 16.00pm

Trinity, Leek - at 10.00am Rev Richard Pope at St Edwards - Refugee Week

Waterhouses Methodist Church- at 18:30pm with Rev Eleanor Smith

Wetley Rocks Methodist Church - 10:30am with Ms Beryl Stew



God has planted us like trees to flourish and grow.
Our soil is God's garden.
Daily we grow towards the light.
We give coolness, shade and beauty to God's garden.
God makes us blossom in our youth.
God makes us produce fruit in our maturity.
God renews our life, season by season.
Give thanks to the Lord.

Song: Change my heart, O God, make it ever true
[Change My Heart oh God - Vineyard \[With Lyrics\] \(youtube.com\)](#)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you see us just as we are, deep inside, not just the outside stuff. You remind us that it is our hearts that need to be changed. As we come before you today, we pray that you will show us your pattern for our lives. Make us willing to change and be changed. God chose David even though he was the youngest son. God, who can change and equip anyone for anything, chooses us. Show us anew how privileged we are to belong to you. Amen

Reading: Mark 4:26-34

Song: Amazing Grace [Amazing Grace \(Hymns with lyrics\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

Reflection

When you look at your life today, what's different compared to your life a year ago, three, five, twenty years ago?

I'm not asking about circumstances or events. I am asking about you. In what ways have you changed? Have your values changed, the things that guide and direct your life? Are your priorities different? Has your spirituality changed? Your concerns for the world and others? What troubles your soul and breaks your heart these days? Are you loving in a new way? How has your self-image changed or the way you view the world? What seeds have germinated and taken root in you? What new sprouts are coming up in you? Where is growth taking place and what does that look like?

And how did any of that happen?

When I look back on my life I can see qualitative changes in my life – for the better – because I started on my journey of faith, from having no faith in anything to having a faith and building trusting friendships. My life of prayer today is very different from a few years ago and I'm not really sure when or how it changed but I know it has. My passion for peace, and the well-being of others has grown in ways I can't explain.

My guess is that some of you could say similar things about aspects of your life. And that is not to suggest that any of our lives have been a straight line of progression. We all know better than that. That's not how growth works.

But the reality, as Jesus describes it in the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-34), is that there is an energy about our lives, a spirit moving within us. Every one of us has been planted and something is growing within us. Sometimes we don't see it, believe it, or trust it. But it's there. Sometimes we wait years hoping, looking, and wondering when, and then one day we see the first green blade rise up. Other times we wake up one day and are surprised by what has changed within us. How did that happen? When did it happen? I don't know but Jesus says it's always been there. It is not dependent upon us but we participate in it.

This parable Jesus tells is not about gardening or farming. Jesus is using images from gardening or farming to talk about your life and my life. His parable is a metaphor for the way God works in our lives. It's meant to be an encouragement and to offer hope.

Our lives are like a garden that has been planted with seeds. And you know how that works. It takes time. A lot happens underground, hidden within the soil of our lives. There's a lot of waiting. And then one day something sprouts and begins to grow, "first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head." We are always in process, living into our completion.

"It is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground," Jesus says. And I wonder, who are those someone's in your life? Who has scattered seeds on the ground of your life? And what were those seeds? Who are the people that have loved and encouraged you, offered wisdom and guidance for your life, spoke difficult truths that changed your life? Who are the ones that gave you hope, stood by you, helped you find yourself? In what ways did they offer you a place to put down roots, find stability, and get your life in order? Who has awakened you and opened your eyes to see the world, others, and yourself differently? Who has inspired and mentored you? Who has called forth from you more than you thought you had? In what ways did someone grow you up and call you into your better self?

Those are seeds scattered in your life by someone. Who is doing that for you today? What seeds are they scattering?

And what if you and I are to be seed scatterers in the lives of others, for the life of the world? Have you ever forgiven and reconciled with another, or asked someone's forgiveness? When have you put another's interest before your own? Who have you encouraged, loved, reached out to in compassion? When have you sat with someone in their grief and said, "I'll be here for you?" When have you spoken out and worked for justice? When have you shared with someone else the seed that you are? In what ways are you doing that today?

What barren ground is waiting to be seeded and planted with your life, gifts, passions, presence, and concerns? Maybe it's the barren ground of racism, violence, poverty. Maybe it's the barren ground across which migrant families walk seeking a better life. Maybe it's the barren ground of loneliness, fear, or despair. Maybe it's the barren ground of grief, pain, or heartbreak. How might you scatter seeds in those places and a thousand others like them?

What is sprouting and growing in your life today? What is flourishing and blossoming? Where is there new growth? What does that growth look like? Is it in your faith journey, marriage, parenting? Maybe it's your concern for what is happening in our world today? Maybe there's a growing compassion for those in need. Maybe you have a new vision for who you are and how you want to live your life. Maybe it's a dream or vision for your life that is coming to fruition. Maybe your heart is softening and there's a new tenderness in your relationships.

What do you wish was growing in the garden of your life? What colours or fragrances are missing? Where have weeds taken over? What needs attention?

I'm well aware that I have asked you more questions than I've given you answers. I have no answers, and Jesus offers none in today's parable. Parables don't offer answers they ask us better questions. They give us our work to do. They offer a different lens through which to see ourselves, others, and the world. And maybe seeing differently is the beginning of being different. What is this parable showing you about your life and the world? What do you see today?

What will you do with what you see? Celebrate and give thanks? Water, fertilize, prune, pull some weeds? Make some changes?

Meister Eckhart, a 14th century German monk, says this about the seeds we've been talking about:

The seed of God is in us.

Given an intelligent and hard-working farmer,

it will thrive and grow up to God, whose seed it is;

and accordingly its fruits will be God-nature.

Pear seeds grow into pear trees,

nut seeds into nut trees,

and a God seed into God.

Intercessions

Lord, we thank you for your ongoing love for us. Like trees stretching up to the sun we want to grow upwards towards you. We bring the people of your world before you and pray for those who do not find their security in you. We ask that the gifts of your creation will be spread more fairly, and that those who have nothing might receive enough to start them off. We pray for those who waste wealth, that they will see their mistakes. We pray that your people will hear your word and that, understanding it, they may grow ever closer to you. Amen



Song: Will your anchor hold in the storms of life [Will your anchor hold in the storms of life \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Blessing: Caring God, just as we look after plants to give them what they need to grow, give us what we need so that we can become the people we are meant to be and welcome others to your kingdom. Amen