

July 16, 2023: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Seventh Sunday after Pentecost**~

*“Blessed are you, because you see, and you hear.”*

Our services can be found on our website at [www.barrechurch.com](http://www.barrechurch.com)

---

**Scripture Reading: Matthew 13 v 1-9 and 16, 18-23**

### **1. Introduction:**

This year I learnt that planting from seeds is not the easiest undertaking. In the past I have done some of it with Basil, which was a great success. This time I thought I'd try a few other plants, including Zinnia seeds, which I heard should be easy, but I did not have good luck, but my tomato plants, arugula, and snapdragons are growing nicely. For the rest, I resorted to seedlings, which were obviously started in the right conditions in the various greenhouses, including soil, light and other protections it needed. There are certainly good lessons to be learned from planting seeds successfully, and I'm sure I'll do better next time! I would like to make a note here that a little more sun would help with the growth we all would love to see! Prayers for that!

### **2. We need good soil!**

Jesus describes in detail in this Parable of the Sower, the various conditions of the soil where the farmer sowed the seeds. He shows us what happens first, with seeds that get eaten by birds, because there was no good soil for it to settle in, then there are those seeds that fell on rocky areas, and did not survive in the hot sun, then the thorns choked the next bunch of seeds, until we learn about the perfect conditions of the good soil that produces a good crop, more than expected by the farmer. Good soil conditions require preparation and good composting and more, especially when it comes to produce such as vegetables and fruit to be sold or used by the farmers themselves. Any farmer or gardener would agree that it takes good soil preparation for a healthy crop. That, in addition to sun and water, of course.

### **3. Blessed are you, because you see, and you hear:**

Jesus ends the parable with these words, "They who have ears, let them hear." The disciples did not fully understand Him and wanted to hear why He spoke in parables. He replied by saying that the knowledge of the Kingdom belongs to them, the disciples, and not to those who do not hear. Jesus refers to the prophet Isaiah to explain how people's hearts have become calloused. They have closed their eyes and can hardly hear with their ears. And so, they will hear but never understand, and see, but never really perceive the secrets of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, some of them are like the seeds that are eaten by the birds, because they don't understand, and so, before the knowledge of His message can get hold, it disappears, and in His words, are snatched away by the evil one. Some of them are like seeds that fall on the rocky road. They are happy, but because there is no depth and the seeds do not take root, their joy and knowledge only last for a short while. They can't withstand the troubles of their lives and the world because they do not drink from the wisdom of God's words. The ones whose seeds fall among the thorns are the ones that are overcome by the worries of the world, and so there is no hope and it is hard to reach out to God, to pray, because these situations often lead to depression and when you're depressed, it is hard to focus on hope and joy.

But then He tells them, there is hope in the story of the seeds that fell on the good soil. It's as if He reminds them to think about their home where they have planted their vegetables. Remember what you do to prepare the soil so that you and your family can harvest a good crop. How do you prepare the soil? Do you clean up nicely? Do you put down some compost? What do you do, before you put down those seeds? Just as you prepare the soil before you plant the seeds, that is how you need to prepare your hearts and minds and your souls in order to receive the words that come from My mouth. Now, you, My disciples, have done it, because you have followed Me, but there are those among the crowds who come because they want instant gratification, but aren't ready to see what I have come to do, and cannot hear My words fully, because they have other interests, and too many worries, and so cannot hear and experience the joy of the Kingdom of God.

Then He tells His disciples, “Blessed are you, because you see, and you hear”. You were open for My presence with you, for My love and for My message, and so you are blessed and will understand the secrets of the Kingdom. You will have that inner joy of God’s Holy Spirit inside of you.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

Back to our house...meanwhile, we decided to plant grass seed on the roadside of our house, because it was filled with large patches of dry soil and weeds. Even the weeds did not grow and multiply there! After much consideration and consultation, we started cleaning up with the help of a neighborhood teenager, put down some topsoil and finished the seeding. I asked God’s help with all these seeds we just planted, that they would grow, because we planted them in early July, a bit late because of the summer heat. With all the rain we have had, (and sadly, I want to note, led to floods and with farmers losing their crops) the grass started growing, and it is still growing, and I am grateful to see! There is joy in seeing something grow, even when there is concern over the turbulent weather and devastation we are experiencing.

In reading this passage, I am reminded of the importance of preparing the soil for when we plant seeds or seedlings or bulbs and shrubs and so forth. I remember how hard it was getting into the ground to loosen up the soil. I knew I couldn’t just throw that seed down and hope for the best! I am also reminded of the times I may not have given too much attention to some areas in the garden which may have needed a little more compost or fertilizing. This passage also reminds me of how we sometimes can be in tune with God’s message and will for us, staying disciplined with our prayer life and spiritual renewal and keeping the faith. That’s when we know that God will show up, and we feel that inner joy which only God can bring. Then there are times our hearts and minds and eyes and ears are probably not as receptive and open to see and hear how God wants to lead us and intervene in our lives. May God help us reflect on this message today and this week and remind us of the requirements of receiving and seeing and hearing the secrets of the Kingdom of God, especially in today’s world, where depression and hopelessness and despair and violence and hatred have entered our spaces and threaten to bring us down.

May we seek the help of the Holy Spirit to see and hear God's wisdom and guidance in our lives and for our church, our community. May God help us to pray for our world, and do what we can to help and influence change, so that the peace of God will permeate in those turbulent spaces. Amen.