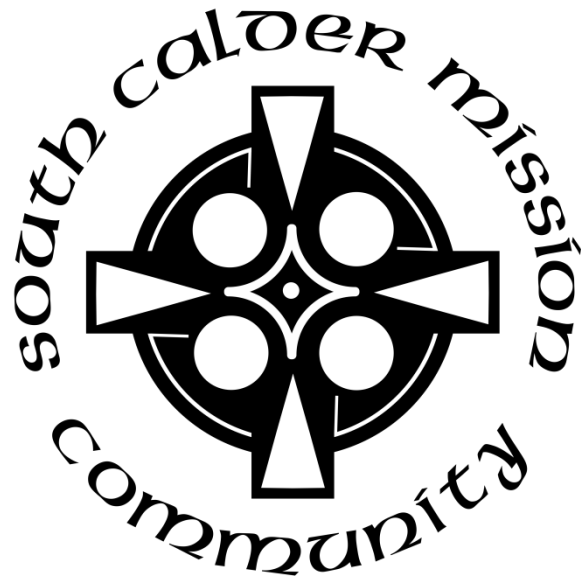


*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word
for
Sunday 12 July 2026
Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart.”

Matthew 13:19.



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.
Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our
sins in penitence and faith.

**Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleanse me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

Creator God, you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see, and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read **And can it be that I should gain.**

THE WORD OF GOD.

Isaiah 55:10-13.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Psalm 65.

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; ♦
to you that answer prayer shall vows be paid.
To you shall all flesh come to confess their sins; ♦
when our misdeeds prevail against us,
you will purge them away.
Happy are they whom you choose
and draw to your courts to dwell there. ♦
We shall be satisfied with the blessings of your house,
even of your holy temple.
With wonders you will answer us in your righteousness,
O God of our salvation, ♦
O hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
In your strength you set fast the mountains ♦
and are girded about with might.
You still the raging of the seas, ♦
the roaring of their waves
and the clamour of the peoples.
Those who dwell at the ends of the earth
tremble at your marvels; ♦
the gates of the morning and evening sing your praise.
You visit the earth and water it; ♦
you make it very plenteous.
The river of God is full of water; ♦
you prepare grain for your people,
for so you provide for the earth.
You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; ♦
you soften the ground with showers and bless its increase.
You crown the year with your goodness, ♦
and your paths overflow with plenty.
May the pastures of the wilderness flow with goodness ♦
and the hills be girded with joy.
May the meadows be clothed with flocks of sheep ♦
and the valleys stand so thick with corn
that they shall laugh and sing.

Romans 8:1-11.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***The Spirit lives to set us free.***

GOSPEL

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!'

'Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

REFLECTION – The Parable of the Sower.

The Parable of the Sower together with the story of The Good Samaritan must be amongst the best known of all Jesus' teachings.

I like to picture Jesus speaking to the crowds whilst sitting in a boat on Lake Galilee; there must have been a small inlet there which created a natural amphitheatre so that everyone could hear what he had to say. The analogy of the seed being sown would have been familiar to many in his audience, but what was he trying to explain? And how is it relevant to us today?

Later in our passage Jesus first tells his disciples that they have (it seems) already received the knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven (the Kingdom of God in Luke's gospel) unlike his audience who have yet to enjoy that privilege (*they are forever hearing but never listening*). Perhaps this is a consequence of having Jesus in their daily lives as they journeyed with him along the way.

Jesus then goes on to explain the parable: the seed being sown stands for the message about 'the kingdom'. So, the first question this story prompts might be: what is the message and how might we receive it? Sometimes, rather than use the title 'Message' it might be helpful to use the 'Word', the 'Word of God'.

The Word of God can mean different things to different people. To some, the Word of God means what's written in the Bible, literally every single word and without compromise.

For others, the Word of God or Message of the Kingdom is discerned and revealed from reading the bible, guided by the Holy Spirit.

But for all those who have read Jesus' teachings and persevered in their desire to understand the meaning behind them, the message about the Kingdom of God does become apparent and ultimately very real. And it is my own experience that the more we read and pray about it the greater our depth of understanding becomes and, paradoxically just how simple the message actually is!

We must love God and love each other, just as Jesus commanded his disciples before they set out for Gethsemane. And, it's remarkable that, having grasped this simple message we still long to hear it, again and again whether through worship, teaching – sermons and reflections, through our hymns (OK, we all have our preferences!) and, above all, through prayer, as we enrich our understanding and continue on the journey with our Lord.

Of course, this doesn't mean we don't occasionally get it wrong or forget what we've already gained. And perhaps this brings us to the second question, and using the same analogy: what kind of soil am I – are we? I suspect it's a question we have often asked ourselves during our Christian journey.

So what about the seed that falls onto the path only to be eaten by the birds? What might this refer to? Whilst most people I know respect my Christian faith there are one or two who scoff at the very idea of believing in God, any god for that matter, so that, even if they hear the Word it means nothing to them other than perhaps a quiet source of amusement. The evil one, says Jesus, has snatched it away from them.

What about the seed that falls on to the rocky places? There are some, who will have shown some initial enthusiasm as they came to belief but perhaps when the gospel began to make demands on their daily lives the Word never really became rooted in their hearts and they fell away.

And what about the seed that falls amongst the thorns and briars? This really strikes home, and speaking for myself, I know too well how the busyness, cares and concerns of daily life can be allowed to get in the way of our devotions and separate us from God. Remarkably I also know that Jesus usually waits for me to catch up later.

Praise the Lord!

And what about the good soil? Again, it seems to me that this is never an easy given. Just as with growing flowers or vegetables in our gardens we need to work hard to make the soil ready for growth – tilling and fertilizing, eradicating those persistent weeds and stones that can so easily be a stumbling block to progress. It needs more than the occasional attendance at a stimulating service, or bible study class; it needs regular reading and engagement with the bible and, of course prayer. Not just routine prayers but thoughtful, earnest, heartfelt engagement with God. Something many of us struggle to achieve at times. But when we do how wonderful and enriching it is!

Jesus seldom explained his parable stories to his listeners. It is likely he wanted them to think and ponder them as they went back to their ordinary, everyday lives. We have the benefit of their explanation in the gospels and so the '*knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven*' should be ours to keep but also to share.

Of course, having this knowledge we should always strive for its values of peace, justice, freedom, wholeness and compassion in all that we do and say. In our broken world today it seems unlikely these values will ever come to be universally recognised and adopted and this will only be realised at our Lord's second coming.

So, perhaps the last Word is:

*He who testifies to these things says, Yes, I am coming soon.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev 22: 20)*

Malcolm Richardson.

Suggested hymn to sing or read I heard the voice of Jesus say.

THE CREED

All I believe in God the Father,
whose loving care is the pattern for family life.
I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
who lives in my heart through faith,
and fills me with his love.
I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens me with power from on high.
I believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



THE PRAYERS

A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*

Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace.
Look upon our divided world
to be with those who are victims of violence.
We pray for the people of Ukraine, the Middle East
and all who have been subjected to the cruelty of others.
Help us to know the gift of your peace
in the power of your Spirit and
we ask you to soften the hearts
of those who can stop the fighting.
Creator God, we ask for your aid as your children of light
living in the darkness of our world.

Amen.

Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group.

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church
in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder
Mission Community;
for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by,
for all who make up your family in our churches today,
for the faith we have in common, and for the people and
traditions which make each church unique.
By your Spirit, guide and equip us,
that together we might find new ways
to reach out to our local community,
to show your love to our neighbours,
and to encourage them
to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives.
Father, we offer ourselves to your service,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

and the Lord's prayer...

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE CONCLUSION

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***You shall go out with joy.***

The following prayer is said

**Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.**

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,
send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

And can it be that I should gain.

<https://youtu.be/dC8HSEKtuio>

The Spirit lives to set us free.

<https://youtu.be/8CumpuwbWv4>

We plough the fields and scatter.

<https://youtu.be/ccVEjKFkAV4>

You shall go out with joy.

<https://youtu.be/ivfUKd6AFXw>