

Two More Seeds

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 August 2023

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, brothers and sisters and friends. The joy is always to worship the Lord together. Just a few intimations before we begin. Myrtle Campbell, Reverend Myrtle Campbell, Barvis, has asked if we'd a pulpit swap for this evening.

So we'll be heading off to Barvis and he'll be coming here just for this evening. Also to announce there'll be a Kirk Session meeting on Thursday after the PM.

So please keep us in prayer for that. And finally, just as a note of interest, we hope to be starting our monthly fellowships after evening fellowships on Sundays soon enough.

If there's any speakers you have that come to mind, anyone you want to hear to speak, let me know and I will make contact with them. I will try and get them to share a word of testimony or share a word of anything to us.

So any speakers that come to mind, anyone you've wanted to hear perhaps for years and haven't had the chance to hear, please let us know and we'll try and get a hold of them. We can do online too as well as in person.

[1 : 0 9] We've got the screen next door so we can make use of that. So if anyone comes to mind, please let us know. All that being said, we're here to worship God. Let's sing to his praise.

First of all, from Scottish Psalter and Psalm 62. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 62. We can sing verses 7 down to verse 12 of the psalm.

That's on page 295 of the church psalm. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 62 on page 295. We can sing verses 7 down to verse 12.

Psalm 62.

Psalm 62.

[2 : 4 6] Psalm 63. Psalm 63.

Psalm 63. Psalm 63. Psalm 64. Psalm 63. Psalm 54.

Psalm 62. Thank you.

On well said not your heart, when I'm in peace, it's your gift.

God, God, it spoke in arms to me. Yes, I heard a name.

[4 : 3 2] That power turned on mighty God, that won't have her day.

In there she does so how to be, because, O Lord, alone.

For now, according to its word, reward us, every one.

Amen. Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Amen. Lord of God, we come before you, and we come before you this day, humbling ourselves before us, sovereign and holy God.

We acknowledge that we come to this place, and often we come to worship, and come to services, and come to even times of fellowship with our brothers and sisters, and times of fellowship with you, and we have so many things on our minds.

[5 : 59] There's so many things which distract us, which take us away from what it is we're here to do. We're here this day to worship you, to call upon your name. We're here this day to hear from your word, and to be reminded from your word just who you are, of your loving kindness towards your people, of your patience towards us.

But also reminded today of the warnings you give those who, as of yet, do not and will not listen to you, as to the warnings you give those who, as of yet, have no concern for their souls, but also the patience you show towards them.

That you give them, day by day, new opportunities to come to you. Day by day, new opportunities to come and to understand that even though, yes, they may be lost in sin, that there is one who has come to be their saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who takes away the sin of the world, who on his very burdened shoulders took on to his own self the full wrath of all the sins of all his people.

Lord, help us this day not to minimise, not to forget just the horror, but also the wonder of that sacrifice for his people.

That he who knew no sin, he who eternally dwelt in perfection, receiving eternal praise and adoration. That he took on human flesh.

[7 : 36] That he walked beside his created beings. That he felt the reality and sensed the reality that it was to be human.

And for every day of his life on this earth that he suffered, that in his humility, he became like his own people. Like us in all ways, apart from sin.

So with confidence this day, we can say for certain that we have a saviour who knows us. A saviour who is close to us. A saviour who cares for us.

One who knows what it is to suffer as we suffer. But it has done so without sin, without fault, without blemish. And because he is our faultless, suffering saviour, we come to him today knowing that because of his perfected, finished work, that he reigns and rules at your right hand.

And because we have a perfect saviour who is in his flesh now and forevermore. But as we come just now to you, we come to one. We come to the son who knows what it is to have lived a life on earth.

[8 : 44] We come to one who knows our pains, who knows our cries. It's to that caring saviour we draw close this day. It's to that gentle, loving saviour we come just now and we confess our own weaknesses.

This week our own backslidings, our own waywardness. It's to our caring and close saviour we come just now and we ask for help as we acknowledge that we face so many struggles.

We pray just now especially for those here who are struggling just now. Those who are struggling both physical and mental pain. Those who are going through trials and tribulations and pains and anxieties.

Those who are suffering various things at this moment. Lord, we ask you would be close to them. Those who are suffering and perhaps no one knows but you and they. Lord, we ask you would draw close to them.

Those of them who are your people, Lord, you'd remind them as to their place with your son. Those who are not yet your people this day who are suffering here. Lord, we ask you would use this time of pain perhaps to bring them closer to you.

[9 : 56] We pray just now for those who are not here but who we know would long to be here. Brothers and sisters who through age and illness and for other reasons find themselves often not able to gather with your people.

Lord, we ask you bless them especially just now that they would have a special sense of your presence with them. They would know that we remember them and that we care for them. We also remember just now those we love and care for who are not here.

Those we love and care for who have no intention of ever coming near this building. Those who are our friends and our family and our neighbours. Lord, who are happily living out in the world just now with not a single interest, not a single worry as to their souls.

Lord, we ask you that they're all alongside them and we ask you use us as witnesses. Help our conduct and our words and their action, even our very thoughts to be bold witnesses to you.

Help us to be gentle, to be loving but also to be zealous. Help us, Lord, to live as those who are ambassadors. Those you have sent to be your witnesses in this place.

[11 : 06] We do pray for this place. We do pray, Lord, for this district. We thank you for your presence here. You have placed your people here over many years to be salt and light.

As we pray for ourselves, we also remember, as always, our brothers and sisters next door. We pray for them again in their time of vacancy. We pray for the one who leads their service today, Lord. You'd give him the words to say.

I pray for them, Lord, that you would, if at your will, you would give them one who would lead them and guide them, who would bring them into holy things, who would infuse them for the sake of the gospel. But in this district, we would have two gospel churches willing to do the hard work to see your name glorified and to see the gospel going out.

Lord, as we pray for our brothers and sisters next door, we also pray for ourselves. Lord, you would enliven us, we ask, as a congregation. We thank you for the unity you've granted us so far. Lord, we ask we would make the most of this unity to then reach out, to work together well as brothers and sisters, to reach out to this community where so many homes darkened, so many homes who have no idea as to the gospel reality, no idea as to the gospel hope they're missing out on, nor the danger they are finding themselves in currently.

Lord, we ask you would use us as your people. Help us to be truly salt and light in the village here, in this district. Help us to be faithful witnesses.

[12 : 35] Lord, we ask you would forgive us for the times that we have not served you well. Lord, instead we ask you would help us to learn lessons from these times and help us to serve you better. And I'm a way that glorifies you more.

We remember just now the International Church. We thank you that your church is not confined to this island or indeed this nation. Lord, we ask for the church across the world just now, as we gather just now with brothers and sisters, worshipping your name in all corners, in all parts of the earth, we give you praise that you have a worldwide church of different languages, different colours, different cultures, different customs.

But all your people, all our brothers and sisters united together in our one voice of worship to our one Saviour, with our one united hope of eternity spent with him.

We do pray just now especially for your persecuted church. We pray once more, Lord, for the persecution that our brothers and sisters are facing in India at this time. Lord, you know the detail and you know the specifics.

Lord, we ask you bless your people there, those who are suffering just now because of ill treatment from the state, because of their simple faith in you, because they would not back down and give in to the pressure they face from outside sources to relent as to their love for Jesus, those who are suffering because of it.

[14 : 01] Lord, we ask you bless them and be with them. Give us, we ask, the urgency to pray for these brothers and sisters across the world, brothers and sisters just like us, but who are willing to lay even their lives on the line for the sake of the gospel.

Lord, as we have gospel freedom, whilst we have the freedom in our nation to praise you openly, help us to do so faithfully and to enjoy doing so. Lord, we ask that we'd see your glory.

Lord, your glory known and praised, your name known and praised, not just in our land or our nation, but we ask, Lord, for our village here. Lord, for the homes up and down, Lord, this area and this district would come to know what it is to know and be known by a living God, to serve Jesus as their Saviour, to have him as Lord and King.

Lord, we ask for these days of renewal, these days of revival, knowing that we ourselves as your people must first be revived in our faiths, that we ourselves must be reawakened in our service towards you.

Lord, we ask for that first, and then we ask for the blessing of our island, of our nation, but first and foremost of our district here. For these prayers, all of us, as we say, they feel so big for us, and they feel too big for us, and we know that they are, but we cannot save anyone, regardless, never mind a village or an island or a nation, Lord, but you are the one who has your wonder-working, eternally effortful, flowing waters of life that come straight from the living water of source, which is you.

[15 : 41] Help us, Lord, to rely on that living water as we go about our own daily witnessing. Help us to rely on that living water as we go about our own lives, seeking to serve our living Saviour, that these living waters would come and would change hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, would take dry hearts and make them living streams.

We leave all these things in your eternal hands, asking forgiveness of known and unknown sin, of willing and of unwilling sin, confessing that we are poor creatures before you, poor creatures who worship an incredibly living, wonderful, beautiful Saviour.

It's in His name and it's for His sake. We ask all these things. Amen. Let's turn to reading God's Word. We are doing a part two of last week's sermon.

It overran a bit, so we can look back to Mark chapter 4. Mark chapter 4. Taking a conclusion to our parable of the sower.

Mark chapter 4. It's on page 787. We can read just the parable together once more. Mark 4, page 787. Let's again hear the Word of God.

[17 : 03] Again, this is speaking of Jesus. He began to teach beside the sea, and a very large crowd gathered about Him. So that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea.

And the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And He was teaching them many things and parables. And in His teaching He said to them, Listen, behold, a sower went out to sow.

And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path. And the birds came and devoured it. And the seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil.

And immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. When the sun rose, it was scorched. And since it had no root, it withered away.

And the seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And the seed fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

[18 : 07] And He said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And when He was alone, those around Him of the twelve asked Him about the parables. And He said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God.

But for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see, but not perceive, and may indeed hear, but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

And He said to them, Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word, and these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown.

And when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground, the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of a word, immediately they fall away.

[19 : 13] And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

Amen. So, on to the end of the chapter, we give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word. Let's again sing to God's praise, this time from Sing Psalms.

Sing Psalms and Psalm 63. Sing Psalms and Psalm 63. That's on page 80.

Sing Psalms, Psalm 63, on page 80. We'll sing verses 1 down to verse 8 of the psalm. O God, you are my God alone, I seek your face with eagerness, my soul and body first for you in this dry, weary wilderness.

[20 : 30] Psalm 63, verses 1 to 8, to God's praise. O God, you are my God alone, I seek your face with eagerness, my soul and body first for you, in this dry, weary wilderness.

I've seen you and your glory lives, your brother and glory have my gifts.

I've been your gifts, your love my life, I've sold my gifts, when sing your gifts.

I bless you, Lord, you love my life, I'll raise my heart to you and give.

My joyful will, my joyful will, will sing your gifts, my soul is set, with riches still.

[22 : 13] Upon my head, I lie away, and in my thoughts, I remember you, I imagine you, through the night, and in the constant love in you.

because you are my help alone, in shadow of your dreams, I sing, you hold me up, with you right now, to you, O Lord, my soul and body.

Let's turn back for a short time to the chapter we had, Mark chapter 4.

Mark chapter 4. We're carrying on where we left off last week. Time just went on us last week, so we can carry on and finish off looking at this parable.

Take a text, our verses here, verse 7 and verse 8. Our verse, our seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

[23 : 53] And our seed fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. We left off last week having looked at the first two seeds and soils, but just a reminder to ourselves, as we said, this is often a parable with various different names.

I know in here we see it's called the parable of the sower, others call it the parable of the seeds, others call it the parable of the soils. It depends what your perspective actually is.

Some, of course, will say it's about the sower, it's about the one who is doing the sowing, it's about Jesus, a parable about Jesus, which, of course, is true in one sense.

Others will say it's a parable of the seeds, the seed, of course, is the word, it's all about where the word falls, and that is also true in one sense. But others say it's a parable of the soils, and as we said last week, if we take the soil to represent, as Scripture gives us, the hearts of those who hear the word, then perhaps it's beneficial for us to think of it as a parable of the soil.

[25 : 18] It is, of course, about Jesus as he sows the seed, as he gives out his word, but the question asked and the question that must be answered is where is that seed landing?

What sort of heart, what sort of soil is the seed landing into? Last week we saw the first two types of soil, and we'll summarize at the end, but just to say once more as we look to this parable, the key, as J.C. Ryle reminds us, the golden key of looking at parables is not to be caught up in the detail.

Not often we say that by God's word, often the detail is vitally important to us. When it comes to parables, as we said last week, Jesus is using story to tell people quite simply what he's trying to convey.

He's using imagery that the crofters, the farmers of his day understood, sowers, seeds, and soil. They got that, they could understand that, so that's what Jesus uses.

Again, J.C. Ryle and his commentaries on the parables, if you have time, he's one of the best I've ever found on the parables, he makes clear every time he mentions a commentary in the parables, he always makes clear at the start of his commentary that some folks get so lost in the weeds of interpreting every small detail of the parables, they lose sight as to the glorious reality Jesus is actually sharing.

[26 : 54] So that being said, what are, or what is, the reality of the realities we find for ourselves as we come to an end of this parable? We look first of all at verse 8, and of course down then to verse 18 and verse 19.

And other seeds fell into, verse 7 sorry, other seeds fell into thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no grain. That's explained to us then down in verse 18, and those others are the ones sown among thorns.

They are those who hear the word but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

Other seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it. In the same way we did last week, first of all, let's look at the location.

Let's look at the soil that's being described here. This is soil. This is a very common scenario this week. Those of us who have even begun to do gardens at all, you'll know even the first five minutes of gardening that you're aware that there are weeds and thorns and problems that are so mixed into the soil.

[28 : 17] I'm sure it's not one of us as an escape with scratches and cuts and stings as even to the most basic bit of gardening you find very quickly that our soil is so full of danger.

Sharp things, things that will scratch you, things that will sting you. This is a common reality. As we spend time today, brothers and sisters and friends, to be very blunt, the question has to be asked before we begin.

In the one sense, this was quite a short study, not short because of lack of content. that's why we cut last week short, quite the opposite short because what is said today is actually quite simple and the truth is I could go into the depths of it and we could study all the variations of the words here but what we're presented with today, it is simple gospel.

And as once more as God's word reveals and asks the question of what type of soil is your heart, the blunt reality is you have to leave here today with some sort of answer.

Whether you acknowledge it or not, you are leaving with an answer. As we come to look at this soil just now, the soil that is so full of thorns and danger, the blunt question at the start is, is this your heart today?

[29 : 42] Does this soil represent your spirit, your heart towards the gospel? So we'll summarise the whole parable at the end but just to remind ourselves we saw that there's hard hearted hearts like the soil on the path, like the path itself last week.

There's some who have hard hearts, who have no time for the gospel. The seed lands, it just bounces off, it just lies on top, it's devoured by birds, there's no way in.

Your hearts have grown hard over years perhaps. There's others as we said last time and there's some hope, the seed lands and it grows for a while and you show some promise but the second there is pushback or trial or tribulation it just dies away and you fall away with it.

When we come to this soil today, the soil where we see some thorns, again there is hope, there is soil here to be found, the seed does get planted, other seeds fell among thorns and the thorns go up and choked it, so there's a sense here that yes there's thorns but there is soil, the seed manages to land on the ground and it begins to somehow grow, but as it grows, we see this seed, yes it's taking some form of root, yes it's beginning to flourish somehow, but as it grows, it's not growing for very long before we see something terrifying taking place and again you'll see this yourselves and you know this yourselves and this is why our saviour uses such simple imagery for us.

Any of us who have planted anything, you know yourself just how quickly the weeds can come up. we spent the last few weeks taking out plenty of weeds from our garden, plenty of weeds from our area.

[31 : 48] Within a week or two, the bits weren't treated properly, what do you see? The same weeds in the same places have grown and shot right back up again. They are ongoing, they are determined, they will find a way to choke, to survive.

As this seed takes root, it grows somewhat, but very quickly. Very quickly, as the seed grows, so do the weeds and thorns around it.

The word thorns here, it can be broadly translated as anything that is disrupting the growth of something else. So it's weeds and thorns, the imagery is clear. As the seed grows slowly, so does the thorns beside it.

And the seed doesn't even get a chance, it seems, before it's beginning to be choked by the thorns as they crowd around the seed. You have sat in these pews, dear friends, and you have heard a thousand, if not more, and some here, perhaps you have heard close to a thousand, when you do the maths, you have heard perhaps close to a thousand sermons.

and you sit and you listen and we praise God you are here and you have a good grasp perhaps on the gospel, you have a good understanding of the gospel, but yet you still sit here unmoved and is the answer of that, is the answer because you are like the soil we see here, you have some grounding in the gospel, you have some care for the gospel, but over the months and years and perhaps decades, around you has grown thorns and weeds which are keeping you in, which are stopping you from growing properly.

[33 : 43] How are these thorns, these weeds, how are they described to us? We see three different ways. Jesus talks about the thorns and the weeds in verse 19 as the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things.

I assure you, and I say this, I know ministers say this, but I assure you, there is genuinely no joy, genuinely no joy.

It's doing our service, it's doing our duty, it's fulfilling our calling as we are rightfully and as we should do, but there is no joy in ascending pulpit steps every week and in saying and sharing the stark reality that is before us in these verses.

There's a love of God's word that we have, yes, but there's no joy in reminding people that they do not change what they are doing, if they do not come to Jesus, if they do not understand that they are sinners in need of salvation, that the thorns will keep on choking them until it's too late.

There's no joy in sharing that, but it must be shared. As we look at these three things, the truth is I don't know which of these things perhaps is true for you.

[35 : 09] I'm getting to know you all definitely better as time goes on, I hope to get to know you all even better, but the truth is I don't know what goes on inside your heart or your mind or your soul.

I don't see it, I don't know it and no one else can. No one else can, not your family members, not your friends. The Lord himself and you alone know what is going on inside your heart when you hear the gospel.

When you sit and when you hear the gospel week after week, when perhaps friends and family members talk about Jesus and share the gospel with you week after week, when you feel convicted and you think of what the gospel truly is week after week, does this begin to perhaps describe your heart?

The cares of the world, the first of the thorns and weeds which begin to choke any chance of gospel growth. The cares are literally the cares or worries of the world or of life.

We all have cares, we all have worries, we all live in the real world day to day with responsibilities and burdens, family and profession and health and personal, everything else that is normal.

[36 : 33] There's no sin in that, there's no sin in having concerns and some worry is healthy, we worry rightfully so about health worries and making sure our family are well looked after and everything else.

But that's not of course what's being said here. Yes, we all have worries and things we must be responsible for in our lives, but the truth is even these simple things can distract us and we use them as excuses, take us away from the gospel.

When we think of things which stop gospel growth, we think of big things, don't we? false teaching and heresy and backsliding and great evil and great sin.

More often than not, what is it that stops us from believing properly in Jesus, from believing fully in Jesus? What is it that stops us from giving our life fully to Jesus?

It's a small things, isn't it? It's a small things, it's the normal things of life, it's a normal everyday cares of this world but begin to choke us.

[37 : 51] Our family, our jobs, what people would think and say, what would my loved ones think of me? They know I go to church, they know I have some gospel interest, but if I become a Christian, they'll think I've lost my mind.

They'll think I've finally snapped, but I don't have my faculties anymore. Perhaps it's pride another normal thing we all grapple with.

You think, if I become a Christian, it shows I'm not great. It shows I have need for a saviour. It shows that I need help in life.

And for many of us here, many believers here, that was their story. They didn't come to Jesus because it made them realise they needed help. And because we're naturally proud, that's a problem for us.

Not to be too specific, it affects all of us, but I know for men here, that's something we grapple with. Self-righteousness and pride that stops us coming to Christ, but it's true for all of us equally at times.

[38 : 59] Or the worry of what would others say about me, think about me, I'll be talked about. Or the other worry which sounds quite genuine, that means nothing, of what if I don't maintain my faith?

What if I come to faith and I fall away and make an embarrassment of myself? And we know that's in our culture. That's the biggest lie Satan has used well in our history, in our island, in our culture.

The fear of falling away stops you from coming in the first place. What a sad excuse at the end of the day. Small worries, small fears, what will people think, what will people say, what will I look like, how will I act?

Small worries, small concerns, small cares for life, which sound good perhaps, but which will keep us away from the gospel, keep us away from true gospel growth, what if, what about, and it sounds good and it sounds convincing, but at the end of the day, it means nothing.

What a sad reality it would be, friends, when you come to the end of your days, and you face, as we all must do, your creator, and your excuse for never truly coming to follow nor believe in his son, is your worry what others would think about you and say about you.

[40 : 26] Small concerns, small worries, which feel so big, but mean nothing, which will choke away your gospel hope.

But also we see Christ carries on, there's small concerns, everyday worries and concerns, but also we see riches, the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches.

dear friends, we all know ourselves, but scripture speaks often about the danger of the love of money.

Having money is one thing, I'm sure there's some here, again I don't know, I'm sure there's some here you've been very successful in your life, you've worked hard for it, you've saved well perhaps, you've done smart life choices, smart investments, and you're living a comfortable life, as long as you've not committed sin to get there, there's no sin in that, there's no sin in having possessions, there's no sin in having money, but there's great sin and dangerous sin in love of money, but there's great sin and dangerous sin as we see here in following the deceitfulness of riches, the grasping nature of money, the grasping nature of greed, which makes you secure and easy and happy in life.

We've often heard it said and heard it preached, but it's true. When we think back to our own history as an island, think back to our own grandparents and perhaps great grandparents or some of us, if not further back, think of the stories we hear of those who perhaps even lived in this village, church, and truly what did they have materially?

[42 : 21] Not very much. We know our island history is one of material poverty, money, in terms of poverty for many of our people, indeed most of our island, one of material poverty, but also what was our island known for?

Material poverty, that was often mixed with what? Spiritual wealth. We know that's the case. We have all the stories, all the accounts of those who had gone before us in the faith, who had very little to look to, very little to feed themselves with, very little to afford to keep themselves going, but who loved the Lord, who served the Lord, who knew the Lord.

As we become richer materially, we have become much poorer, in our faith, and that can be seen and observed across the world, and across our own island, and our own stories, I'm sure for some here.

Rich people are saved often, rich people can be saved, but as Christ made clear in this not today's sermon, but as Christ made clear in that well-known sermon, a part of sermon, it is easier, is it not, for a camel to what?

to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person, a rich man, to be saved, is not impossible, but God is not impossible, of course Christ is there using an illustration that seems impossible, but it's not, because God can save the ones he saves, and he is more than able to do so, but if you're here today, and if you're comfortable in life, again, I don't know your financial situations, it's not my business to know that, I'll never want to know that, but there are some here, I'm sure, and you're comfortable financially, you've done well in life, and we praise the Lord for that, as long as it's all on us gain, you've done well in life, and you're able to relax just now, and because you can relax just now, and not worry about money, or not worry about the bills, perhaps, you are not relying on God, you have no worries about God, and you're too busy relaxing into your wealth, relaxing into your security, you've lost sight as to who God actually is, and the danger your soul is in, because of your riches, and they choke you, and your money chokes you, and your security chokes you, and your comfort chokes you, and you realise you have no need for

[44 : 58] God, you have no need for God to provide for you, no need for God to look after you, to keep you, as well as it were, to give you your next meal, because you have no need for faith in God, because you're rich, you're comfortable, and before you know it, you come to the end of your days, having lived perhaps a well-deserved, comfortable retirement, and you go to your eternal home, and you meet the judge, of all judges, at the end of the day, and you say to him, I didn't come to Jesus, I didn't have to, I didn't need to, I didn't need his help, nor his hope, nor his support, I didn't need his comfort, because I had my own, as we all know on that day, your wealth and your riches are left behind on this side of the grave, all to mean nothing in the end, concern for small things, the concern for riches, the deceitfulness of riches, but also finally, as it comes to the thorns, the desires for other things, it's very vague, you think, it's very, very vague, why is Christ being so vague here as he talks to the disciples, as he shares this parable, the desires for other things enter in and choke the word,

God? It's vague for a reason, it's even more vague in the Greek, the desire for things, not in a wealth sense, not in a greed sense, it could be some say, but that's not the sense given, this is just to take in the many, many things that keep people away from the gospel, because we all have the same habit, don't we?

We all sit in church and trust me, I've been there myself at one point, we all sit in church and think, well the minister didn't say this or this, therefore it doesn't count towards me, I'm not rich, I don't care what my family think, therefore I'm safe with God, or if I haven't said something that applies to you so far, you think, well I'm fine, I'm okay, the game, I don't know if you play this game, I shouldn't say game, but the deceit that you play for yourself, the minister hasn't looked at me yet, therefore he's not talking about me, you'd be surprised, and indeed I am surprised, that there's people who are far too old to be playing childish games who still think that way, the minister hasn't made eye contact with me yet today, and therefore this is not about me, well as I said before brothers and sisters, your minister is half blind, I can't see half of you anyway, so don't worry about that, it's not me I have to answer to at the end of the day, when Christ comes here to this final section, to this final choking reality, the care and concern of other things, he says that because we are so good at looking for ways out, so good looking for excuses as to why the gospel somehow doesn't apply to us, whatever your excuse might be, if I was to ask you one by one just now, those who as of yet don't proclaim to know

Jesus publicly, if I was to ask you, why are you still not come to him, if I was to ask you one by one, give me one excuse why as of yet you haven't put your faith in Jesus, your excuses fall in this final bracket, other things, other concerns, other cares, other things, other reasons you are allowing the word to be choked before it ever grows in your life, all this to say there is no excuse at the end of the day which works, there is no excuse which makes sense and I know there are some here perhaps and perhaps you have been hurt perhaps, you have been damaged perhaps by those within the church, perhaps that's your story, Christ knows, Christ cares, there are some here perhaps and Christians have said things to you that are awful perhaps, Christ knows and Christ cares, come to the one who knows and cares, you're not coming to join a gathering of people purely, no, you're coming to join Christ and his eternal worldwide, eternally wide church, there is no excuse today,

Christ takes in all levels of excuses, don't let the hard heartiness of the thorns of your life, whether it's cares, what others would say and think cares for yourself, whether it's the deceitfulness of riches, whether it's whatever excuse you go to, if you let that stop you, come to Christ, if you let that stop the gospel grow from your heart, you have no excuse when it comes to the final day, none at all.

[50 : 13] And we end with the good got soil, the healthy soil, in verse 8, and our seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold, and then down for us, down to verse 20, it's explained for us, but those that were sown on good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

Soil that is, good soil is soil that is well watered and with plenty of nutrients, that's well looked after, it's well sheltered if needs to be, needs to be, as well cared for soil.

Is this your heart? Are you today, as you hear the word once more, is your heart truly a good soil? soil, we pray that it is. A good soil is soil that is well watered, well watered with the living water that comes only from Jesus and him alone.

As he calls himself the source of all living water, as you draw close to Jesus again and again, he waters and rewaters that eternally spring up water which comes from him, he rewaters the living soil of your heart so the word takes root and it grows and it grows.

Brothers and sisters, this is our encouragement. The good soil of our heart is also fed. A good soil must have nutrients. Where do we find our nutrients?

[52 : 03] We find it, of course, from the word of God. Read and taught, privately read, privately studied, publicly read, publicly studied and taught.

That is how we grow as Christians. We're watered by coming to the source of the water of life or saviour publicly and privately. We come to the word of God publicly and privately.

Also, we receive shelter, perhaps we could say, just to complete the image that we had before. And how are we sheltered? How are we taken care of?

What is the netting that's around us, keeping the flies away and the beasts away from this precious seed? What's the shelter that keeps the sun from hitting us fully? What's it not the church?

Fellowship with one another. This is where we grow together, where we recognise, if we're being honest as Christians, that we gather together this day to worship God together.

[53 : 06] Myself included with you all, and the elders included with you all, we gather together as one body, each one of us, with our sins, and our shortcomings, our regrets, our worries, our anxieties, our at times small faith, our at times weak faith, we come together as Christians, as brothers and sisters, all these things to support one another, to come alongside one another.

When we talk about starting up fellowships, after church fellowships in the hall, it's not just something to do on a Sunday evening, we do it because time together is of vital importance.

Time together in public worship and in more informal settings, it is vitally important for us. Good soil, good nutrients, good watering system from eternal spring of water, good shelter of one another and community, is this your heart, dear brother, dear sister, are you under, as it were, the constant watering of coming to Jesus again and again?

Are you finding yourself coming to the source of water, that source of eternally springing, eternally flowing water from the spring of life? Are you finding yourself under the constant nutrients being fed by the word of God in private and in public?

This encouragement for all of us, myself included, are you taking time to enjoy, as it were, the shelter of the fellowship of God's people, taking time to grow together as one family?

[54 : 51] What does God promise to those who are his? Note carefully what's said here. Those who are sown on good soil are the ones who hear the word, accept it and bear fruit.

But look what happens here. Thirty-fold, sixty-fold and a hundred-fold. Supernaturally, this one seed produces far more than this one seed is actually able to do.

This one seed, a single seed, it shouldn't be able to do or produce the growth, the crop, but it does. But with God's work, it does. And this is a reminder for us Christians.

But we are, yes, perhaps just a small patch of soil with a small gospel understanding, that small seed that's sown in our hearts. But God can use that and he does use that and he turns that small seed and he multiplies it for his glory and by his power.

And some of us he multiplies it thirty-fold, which itself is more than enough. Others of us sixty-fold, others of us a hundred-fold. Not all of us bear the same level, the same amount of fruit and that's fine.

[56 : 07] The sower is not angry at those that bear thirty. There's no sense of that here. The sower is not angry at those who bear sixty. He doesn't prefer those who bear a hundred-fold. Each seed bears as our Lord decides it to do.

Some of us will be of gospel use in some areas. Some of us are of gospel bearing, gospel use in other areas. Some of us will see great returns for our fruit.

Others will see small returns, but either way we have the gospel, we know our saviour. Either way there is real gospel growth. The reality is for Christians here often we feel as if there's never any growth, don't we at times?

We think if there's gospel growth, I certainly can't see it. If there's gospel growth in my heart, if you're saying my soil is good soil, then where's the evidence? I feel rubbish, I serve in an awful way, I'm a lacklustre Christian at best at times, I find myself falling to sin again and again, and you think, where's my foot?

Where's the evidence? Quite often if you speak to another Christian who sees your walk and who knows you, they'll often see the evidence more than you will. In fact, it's quite a good sign usually, if you don't see the fruit in your own life, but other Christians, other brothers and sisters do, that's why it's so important we exist together in fellowship to encourage one another.

[57 : 36] Well, this parable took a week extra than we planned it to, but here we are coming to the end of this parable, just to remind ourselves the four types of soil we've been looking at.

Is the gospel seed this day landing on the path? That compacted soil, that rocky soil, are you here today with a hard heart? As the gospel seed just bounces off again and again.

Are you here today with that soil that has no depth, the cares, the concerns, the second you face challenge, the second you face persecution for even coming to believe in Jesus, you just give up.

Is that your story? Are you like the choked seed? There's potential, but all the cares, the concerns of this world, the worries of riches, the deceitfulness of riches, it's choking you and it's stopping the growth.

Are you here today with healthy gospel soil? It might be a small patch of soil you're working with, it might be a tiny wee garden you're working with, your faith might feel like a small, small wee patch of earth, but the word lands in it, it is planted in it, and if you water that with God's word and feed it with God's word and draw close to Christ and engage in fellowship, you'll see that small, small seed begin to grow and grow, and God in his power will bring increase in his way and at his time.

[59 : 12] As God will bless his word to us, let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you once more, Lord, for your word and the gift of it. We ask that you would lead us and guide us this day, help us to be reliant on your word.

We confess that we come often to this place, and we often come and we are awaiting a word from you, awaiting a word in season, Lord. We ask that that would be the case for some today.

For some today that would come to know and come to see where they stand, and if they find in their hearts rocky ground, if they find in their hearts a choking ground, if they find in their hearts a hard path, we ask that we would come to you and pray to you, and Lord, you would take that heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

We know, Lord, that as long as we come to you just now, there is hope for all who cry out to you. There are some here, Lord, and once our hearts, Lord, were rocky and stone-like, but now we are alive for you.

Lord, we pray once more that those here who as of yet do not know you, they would know not just our love and care for them, but this day they would know Jesus for themselves and come to trust and believe and love and serve him as king and saviour and elder brother over them.

[60 : 30] We pray once more as we come to sing your word, we thank you for it, but we have the privilege of singing your word. As we sing it, we know we sing it without error and without danger. We pray, Lord, also for the one who leads the singing.

We thank you, Lord, for the willingness of our presenters each week to lead your public sung praise. We give you praise for that. We can praise you, the living God, and know that our prayers and praises ascend to glory, joining of the prayers and praises of brothers and sisters across this world, even this very moment.

We ask all these things in and through and for Christ and his precious name's sake. Amen. Let's turn to singing in conclusion and God's word.

from Psalm 51, Scottish Psalter, Psalm 51. That well-known psalm of forgiveness and of cleansing.

Scottish Psalter, Psalm 51, page 280. We can sing from verses 2 down to verse 8 of the psalm. We cleanse from sin and freely wash from mine iniquity.

[61 : 40] For my transgressions I confess my sin I ever see. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and thy sight done this ill. But when thou speakst, thou mayest be just and clear and judging still.

Psalm 51, verses 2 to 8. To God's praise. Amen. ■ plays on vocabulary ■ ing here in function else's read, for my I confess my sin I ever see.

I confess my sin I ever see.

Behold, thou iniquity was of love within.

My mother also be conceded in guiltiness and sin.

[63 : 29] Behold, thou iniquity was of love with the free lighted heart.

And wisdom, thou shalt make me whole within the hidden heart.

You, thou withest, all speak in me, I shall be cleansed so.

You, thou withest, all speak in me, I shall be white and honest.

I shall be withest, all speak in me, I shall be white and honest. I shall be withest, all speak in me, I shall be white and honest.

[64 : 40] I shall be withest, all speak in me, I shall be white and honest. I shall be withest, all speak in me, I shall be white and honest. I shall be withest, all speak in me, I shall be white and honest.

Amen. Amen. In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, with you now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen.