

**Whitehorse Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 16 July 2023**  
**Pentecost 7<sup>A</sup>**



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**Introit- Be still for the Presence of the Lord**

Magdalene Shodavaram 2019

Words and music: David J Evans

[https://youtu.be/Vep\\_Ty4Zx1o](https://youtu.be/Vep_Ty4Zx1o)

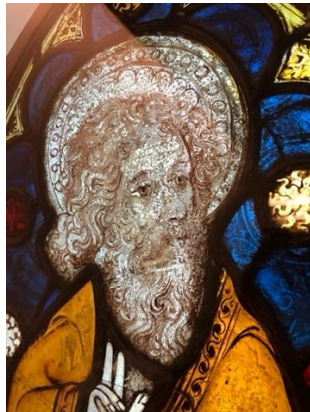
**Welcome**

May the worship bless you.

**Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place.

We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.



**Call to Worship**

May our hearts receive the word,

**May we understand and bear much fruit.**

For your word is a lamp to our feet,

**A light to our path.**

**Prayer – New beginnings**

Lord, take my life,  
 my small life,  
 and illumine it:  
 that everything I say and do  
 may reflect the light of your glory.

Lord, take my life,  
 my small life,  
 and imprint it:  
 that everything I say and do  
 may reveal the image of your love.

Lord, take my life,  
 my small life,  
 and inspire it:  
 that everything I say and do  
 may resonate with the power of your Spirit.

Lord, take my life,  
 my small life,  
 and indwell it:  
 that everything I say and do  
 may radiate your Life,  
 your glorious Life.

*Pat Bennett, from Bare Feet and Buttercups (Edit. Ruth Burgess)  
 Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com) Used with permission*

### **Prayers of Confession**

Spend some time in silence listening to your heart.  
 If there is something you're sorry for, ask God for forgiveness.

#### *Silence*

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us  
 "Your sins are forgiven"  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Hymn 547 - Be thou my Vision**

Natham Pacheco Music 2017 from the Album: Higher  
 Harm. David Evans. 1874-1948  
<https://youtu.be/ihJAJA4ibEs>

### **Young at Heart**



Have you ever held or eaten sunflower seeds? This is just one little plant that grew from a seed. Imagine an entire field of sunflowers. They are such an important seed, feeding so many and hardy, able to adapt and grow anywhere. A bit like the people of God when the word takes root in their hearts, bearing abundant fruit, hardy and can grow and adapt in many places.

### **Reading - Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NRSV updated. Peter Cox**

**13** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they

withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> If you have ears,<sup>[a]</sup> hear!”

<sup>18</sup> “Hear, then, the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this<sup>[b]</sup> age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>23</sup> 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.”

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### Sermon – Rev Tina

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.*



Tissot –© RCL

This is a painting of a farmer walking through fields throwing the seeds all over the place, on paths where the birds eat them, into thorns and into good soil. We may think what a waste.

Jesus is sitting in a boat and the crowds are on the beach listening to him and he is sharing the word of God and throwing it out there in all directions.

We may ponder about what he’s saying.

Paths are solid and seeds cannot grow on them, and they’re destroyed by the sun. Jesus mentions this is like the evil one in whatever form it takes who makes hearts hardened to the word. It’s difficult for a heart full of hate and violence to receive Jesus’ message of love. The heart is hardened, and the word cannot penetrate it.

Birds see seeds on paths and eat them up, but there’s another way of looking at this where the birds are fed and leave droppings with seeds in them in faraway places and the seeds grow and produce food. People in faraway nations discover new grains growing and cultivate new crops.



Rocky ground is a challenge for seeds which find it difficult to take root. Jesus says this is about those who hear the word and receive it with joy but then, because of their belief in the word, they are persecuted or troubled by rejection. Rather than suffer or persevere, they choose not to follow Jesus’ teachings. The word cannot take root in their hearts when they are filled with fear and turmoil. They stop following Jesus when family reject them, religious authorities or society condemn them, or they’re arrested and imprisoned.



However, I’ve always admired little seeds which fall between the cracks on rocky ground and manage to take root, sprout and push their way up through the cracks towards the light, where they find life.



Jesus is the light of the world for those who, despite persecution and hardship, persevere in their faith, where their faith is strengthened by suffering. They grow strong and upright like a gum tree or great old oak which has pushed its way up through rocky ground.

Like this old oak that has grown from a tiny acorn into a mighty tree at the Heide Gallery.



That's how strong the word of God can become in our hearts when we persevere. We need to have a faith during tough times. It's what gets us through the pain.

Jesus uses the image of seeds falling amongst thorns and trying to grow but the thorns grow larger and take all the goodness of the ground and light and choke the life out of the seeds. The same thing happens when the word takes root in people's hearts, but all the worries of the world become their horizon and consume them, so there is no room for the word to take root.

Something similar happens to those who rely on wealth, who believe they don't need God. Their energy goes into making wealth, keeping, and protecting it and the more wealth they have the more it consumes them and chokes the life out of them and fills their hearts with greed, rather than Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of God and the fruits of the spirit.

Perhaps Jesus' fundamental questions for the crowd to ponder about are:  
 where is your heart?  
 how are you receiving the word of God?  
 what gets in the way of you hearing and understanding the word of God?

If the word of God takes root in your heart and becomes part of you, the holy spirit will help you understand the word so that you can bear fruit such as love, joy, peace, and hope.

That is what Jesus is talking about when he speaks about good soil. Seeds falling on it where they become grain that's harvested to make bread and feed the people.

There are flowers from my garden that self-seed called winter roses. This time of year, they produce an abundant crop.



I also plant seedlings for chillies, and they produce an abundant crop.



I don't know what it's like to plant wheat in a field. As a child friends' fathers planted crops in their fields and ploughed in the seeds. Nothing was wasted. There were no paths or thorns or rocky areas, as there were in ancient times.



© RCL

This icon of Jesus tells the story of the gospel with Jesus throwing seed that symbolises the word of God – all over the place in a field. There are no guarantees as to whether the seeds will take root in the ground, or the word of God will take root in people's hearts.

The main point of the gospel is that a heart open to the word is like good soil.

People hear the word and understand, and it takes root in their hearts. The Holy Spirit helps them understand and bear fruit and they yield in their hearts love, joy, peace, and hope and this is witnessed in them by those who know them. Many of these witnesses are drawn to God, to Jesus and his teachings, because of what they see in others.

They like what they see and want it for themselves.

So, what does the gospel mean for us?

Each of us may have a different response. Most of us have family stories and know which members of the family believed in Jesus. They may have been role models where you saw God's love and grace in them and because of them you decided to listen to the gospel, and you came to believe in Jesus because the word took root in your heart.

After my parents died, in 2018, I inherited my great-grandfather's bible, a small pocket-sized bible. He had marked some of the psalms which meant he read the psalms like I do, especially when I'm in need of comfort. The word sustained him during challenging times, such as when my grandfather served in World War I, at Gallipoli and in the trenches in France. He kept the photo of his son in his bible and I'm sure he would have prayed for him every day. After four long years my grandfather returned home to Tarnagulla, in country Victoria.



*By Henry Lyndon*

This is story of the word helping someone during hardship.

The word sustains us in times of testing and celebration. It keeps us. This means the word takes root in our hearts and bears fruit, continued hope, deep inner joy when things work out for the best, with gratitude for blessings, and the kind of peace only God can offer and love. Mostly when the word takes root in our hearts, we are filled with love and when we love we are putting Jesus' teachings into practice and witnessing to the power of the gospel.

May you find life in the Word and may the Word find life and love in you.



### **Hymn 589 – Jesus calls us over the tumult.**

Samuel Flood Jones 1826-95, Cecil Frances Alexander 1818-95

YouTube from The Royal School of Church Music 2021 @RSCM

<https://youtu.be/Y5lxbPK8Ow4>

### **Offering prayer**

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom  
all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen.

### **Prayers of the People – Margot Kemke**

Dear Heavenly Father, we come together today to pray for all the people in our world – for our neighbours, friends, family and for ourselves.

We thank you for this opportunity to share our faith, to increase our fellowship with one another and to ask for your presence in our daily lives.

We pray for your hand to guide us and protect us, and for wisdom and love to share your grace with all around us. May Christ be with us, in us, over and before us as we bring our prayers to you today.

We pray for people in countries where there is conflict and people are afraid to go about their daily tasks.

We pray for people in countries where there are natural disasters which they cannot control but have to live with the consequences.

We pray for people in countries where there is insufficient medical care, education, sustainable food resources or adequate housing.

We pray for wise, honest, just and compassionate governments to care for their people and to raise them up. We pray for governments around the world to do more to care for our environment, to prevent further unnecessary destruction for monetary gain and to encourage us all to do our part in protecting our land.

We pray for the Christian churches in all countries. May the people continue to do Your will, sharing and showing Your love to all, and to care for the physical needs where governments do not. Bless and guide all carers who selflessly give to others who cannot care for themselves. We pray for comfort and healing for all who are grieving, who need medical care, who are lonely or have nowhere to live. O Lord, bring hope where there is despair and joy where there is sorrow.

We pray for the ministers, lay preachers and congregations of our local churches. Give them grace, strength and encouragement to continue to spread Your word in their local communities. We pray for our own Whitehorse ministers and congregation. We pray for our leaders as we all work through the complexities of administration. We ask for Your blessing and encouragement as we share new ideas, and pray that we will all be renewed by the Holy Spirit to honour and serve you each day. O Be merciful to us, O Lord, as we put our trust in You. Together we pray:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

### **Hymn 468 We are Your People.**

Kim Paterson 2021

<https://youtu.be/8o4S5FGPsLg>

### Blessing

May God who supplies seeds to sow and bread to eat.  
 Supply us with all we need to produce a rich harvest.  
 May God bless all our work and worship.  
 Done in Christ's way and for Christ's glory,  
 Today and every day.

*Simon Taylor, Acorns and Archangels Editor Ruth Burgess, Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. [www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com) Used with permission.*

### Hymn 778 Shalom to you Now – tMt video

Elise Shoemaker Eslinger 1942 –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oqiFenpWxY&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=35>



### Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina

#### Worry busters.

When you're worried and can't sleep, are anxious or afraid, go to your favourite bible passage quote such as one of these or a poem such as footprints or Desiderata or the psalms such as psalm 23.

#### A quote from Julian of Norwich

*“And in this he showed me a little thing, the quality of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand. It was round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding and thought, ‘What may this be?’ And it was answered generally thus, ‘It is all that is made.’*

*I marvelled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God.*

*In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it.”*

We are like that hazel nut.



#### Isaiah 43:2

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

#### Isaiah 41:10

*Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*