Harvest Festival Sermon

I love the ‘Mr. Men’ books by Roger Hargreaves! my favourite has to be Mr Greedy. I did occasionally dip into the ‘Little Miss’ books too, but only to try and understand the women in my life? Still trying…

A few years ago…well maybe more than a few… it was the children’s book that I read more than any other and as a result it’s required a lot of sticky tape to hold it together. I particularly like the story of Mr Greedy because it’s one of those Mr. Men books where he has an encounter with something (or in this case someone) He starts to live differently. He is transformed. He is a changed Mr. Man!

God transformed a void in space and time and created what we see today. But that started with the heavens and the earth. Right at the start of the Bible Moses tells us about creation. God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it” …and it was so …and God saw that it was good. The rolling hills around Richmond, Hudswell, Downholme and Marske, the rivers than run through and beyond….we look at the amazing detail on a butterfly, the colours the intricate designs,…. the wonder of a new born lamb….the calf that stands to suckle its mother just moments after it is born – all this comes from God’s heart…..I for one am never closer to God than when I am sat taking in the beauty of his creation…..and what better place that where we are blessed to call home.

This countryside would not be what we see today without the hard work of farmers. When Jesus told the story of a farmer who went out to sow his seed a large crowd was gathering. People were coming to hear Jesus from many towns . They believed in God, and they didn’t doubt that God has a plan for his world. (God has a perfect plan for each one of us; a perfect plan for you and for me.) The crowd wanted to know God better; but many did not realise that Jesus was telling them and showing them what God is really like. He still does that today….take a moment and look in the mirror.

Jesus often taught by using parables – stories – these lessons not always easy to understand. Sometimes we need to think carefully about them and so Jesus said, “If you’ve got ears, listen” (8:8)! In other words, don’t turn your brain off. Instead, think this through and then do something about it!

The farmer in the parable scattered his seed. Some fell on a path….. Can you imagine walking the path to church…to the shops….and scattering seeds? They get trodden on and birds come and eat them.

But in our teaching today….The seed is the word of God (8:11) and there are people who are like the path; unreceptive and unbelieving. If I were to create a new Mr. Man this one could be Mr. ‘in one ear and out the other’. I get lots of post and a lot of it ends up in our recycling bin. Once I think I threw away a birthday card with some money in it, because in my haste I thought it was rubbish. I was in a rush. I didn’t think about what I was doing.

The seed is the word of God (8:11). There are people who are like the rocky ground, hearing the message of Jesus with great joy initially (8:13), but without sufficient soil and moisture the plant soon withers. Life might be great one moment but tough and terrible the next and without strong roots of faith I have known too many people to fall away from their initial joy. Jesus is not to be followed as if he adds value or as if he is a life-enhancing commodity like the fast cars and flashy holidays advertised on the television. He is to be followed because he shows us what God is really like.

Through good times and tough times God is good, but if we have no root to our faith it will not last. In Mr. Man terms it would be Mr. ‘fair-weather commitment’.

The seed is the word of God (8:11) and there are people who are like the seed that fell amongst thorns. These people hear and respond to Jesus (8:14) but their faith gets choked and eventually killed off by “life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.”

The seed is the word of God (8:11) and there are people who are like the good soil. Those “who hear the word, retain in, and by persevering produce a crop.” This is believing and living the Good News of Jesus for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all other distractions, being faithful to Jesus all the days of our life. This is Mr. or little miss Christian and also this describes mr and Little Miss ‘disciple of Jesus’.

So, we are the soil just waiting for the seed…the word of God…

Ask yourself….What kind of soil am I?

Look at your loved ones…..What kind of soil are they?

What kind of soil will we chose to be?

God is constantly sowing his word, his truth, his transforming presence into our lives and through His Holy Spirit is ready to transform us, so that we can become a changed Mr. Man, or a changed Little Miss – good soil, hearing the word, retaining it, persevering, and producing a crop.

If you have ears, listen!

Amen