



Fertile soil for the word of God

Janice Scott *reflects on* Matthew 13:1-9. 18-23

How tempting to use the parable of the sower for our own ends, by pointing to others and identifying those who fall away as soon as life gets tough – those who love material things so much that they can never hear the word, and those who we judge are not worth any effort because clearly they are rocky ground. We, of course, are the good soil and bring forth much fruit!

Such a travesty is reminiscent of the man who tried to take a speck out of his friend's eye, despite the plank in his own eye, for we are all these different types of soil at different times. Sometimes our ears are firmly closed, sometimes we are more concerned with other people's opinions than with God's word, and sometimes the cares of the world fill our minds. Thank goodness God is a prolific gardener, who takes no notice of any of that, but constantly flings his word far and wide, so that on occasion we do produce fruit.

This parable is also known as the parable of the soil, for it is the state of the soil that determines how God's word is received. Rather than pointing a finger at other people or other groups, perhaps our responsibility is to till the soil so that it is ready to receive God's word, and perhaps we need to start with ourselves. ☺

Forgiving God, you overwhelm us with your generosity despite our many failings. Help us to grow so close to you that we become rich, fruitful soil. Amen.

The music of Ordinary Time

Part 3 – sing!

by Heather Smith

Ordinary Time gives us a chance to hear familiar words set to unfamiliar music. While this can seem jarring at first, it is well worth the effort. A summer project might be to listen to unfamiliar music.

Take, for example, the Twenty-third Psalm, "The Lord is My Shepherd". Its pastoral images sit well with a walk through sheep fields. Contemporary settings include those by Howard Goodall (best known for composing the *Vicar of Dibley* theme!) and John

Rutter, while John Goss (1800-1880) composed a chant which you may hear at evensong. Hymn settings include the familiar Crimond (thought to have been composed by Jessie Seymour Irvine (1836-1887), the daughter of a Church of Scotland minister, while she was still in her teens), a contemporary version by Stuart Townend, and "Tarwathie", by Connor Quigley.

Ordinary Time has many musical possibilities. If you let the music you hear and sing over this season lead you, it will take you on all kinds of journeys to unexpected destinations. ☺

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis

by Jane Williams

Jane Williams concludes her study of a great Christian classic.

Throughout the book, Lewis argues that Christianity is a devastatingly practical, applicable religion. It isn't a philosophy but a way of life; its aim is to draw us into the life of God. That makes it vital that we know something of the kind of life we are talking about.

When we pray, we are trying to speak to or connect with God.

But we only do this because we already have some experience of God; we already know that God is available to speak to. We know this because of Jesus, God made human. We also know that without God's help, motive power and presence in us, we wouldn't even be trying to pray. Already, as we pray, we are experiencing what it might be like to be drawn into the life of God, not in a way that destroys our self, but in a way that makes us more fully ourselves. ☺

“ Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in.
Aim at earth and you get neither.”

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), writer and theologian