

## Sermon for 10am on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**Texts:-**

**Hebrews 5:1-10**

**John 12:20-33**

**Theme:- We have to change our selfish ways in order to flourish**

**Prayer:-**

***May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be ever pleasing in your sight O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.***

***Amen***

**Introduction**

**Produce plastic box...**

I was having a bit of a rummage round the other day and came across this box.

**Read label** (Poppy Seeds from Vicarage 2015)

Oh dear, they should have been sown 2 years ago! I remember collecting them from the poppies growing by the vicarage drive!

**Open the box**

Look inside:- the seeds look pretty dry and lifeless – YET poppy seeds last for years don't they?

Remember the trenches in WW1?

**Major John McCrae famously wrote the poem 'In Flanders Fields' In May 1915 to commemorate the death of his dear friend Lieutenant Alexis Helmer in the second battle of Ypres...**

The act of digging the trenches had disturbed the dormant poppy seeds and caused them to germinate and grow.

McCrae looked around and wrote what he saw:-

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.....*

A very poignant and moving poem much loved and quoted over the years!

So there is very strong evidence that poppy seeds will still germinate after many years of lying dormant

So if it's all right with Sarah and Mike I still might be sowing these poppy seeds this year?

**So why was Jesus talking about planting seeds in our gospel reading?** He was talking about wheat.

**Context**

**It was the day of the Passover in Jerusalem** – Jesus had entered in triumph – and 2 of his disciples brought him Greeks with questions.

So – the story he told them may have seemed totally irrelevant; but it wasn't – Jesus was answering their questions with an analogy. He was explaining that if they wanted to have fruitful lives they would have to 'die

to self' and be ready to serve others; giving up their selfish ways.

**This has echoes of our baptism service** – we 'die to sin' and turn to a new life in Christ. Total immersion is very symbolic (some of us indulged in the River Jordan last year!)

**Why was the fact that the questioners were Greeks mentioned?** Because Greeks were famously inquisitive and seekers after truth – they may even have approached the disciple Philip initially because Philip is a Greek name. (This makes sense as our Duke of Edinburgh is from the Greek royal family; his mother is buried in Jerusalem)

**Jesus is instructing them with the truth.**

Jesus refers to the fact that he himself will die before he can rise again and 'draw all men to myself'. The result of his sacrifice will be glory.

**The crowd heard a sound:-** thunder? An angel? It was God affirming Jesus' words. For their benefit not his.

**Thinking about the atmosphere at the time**

Jesus must have been a real puzzle to the Jews/anyone listening to him. The Jews were expecting the messiah – a powerful King and conqueror. Instead of which they had this humble figure preaching service to others, riding on a donkey and predicting his own death!

No wonder the Jews took some convincing and many remain unconvinced to this day!

**So if Jesus knew what was going on and what to expect why would he be 'troubled'?** Perhaps because he was taking on human flesh and so was subject to human reactions...

**What was Jesus teaching the crowd?**

He was teaching that they needed to mend their selfish ways in order to lead productive lives and follow him. He has given similar messages in the past – Remember the story of the talents? (in the form of money/coins) The servants who worked to increase their talents were praised while the servant who merely buried his in the ground was seen as a failure....

Jesus was telling the Greeks that if they valued their earthly life and possessions above all other things they would remain 'dead' spiritually and their lives would be stale and void.

**So what is the message to us today:-**

- Use the talents that God has given us
- Subdue our own selfish needs in order to help others.
- Put God first- of course

**How?**

**It may not be anything very dramatic:-**

It may be helping a neighbour with shopping/making a phone call if someone not been seen for a while. Making teas/coffees/cleaning church etc.

I watched a recent TV programme about the life of Sir Bruce Forsythe – his widow, Wilemina, made the point that 'Brucie' never forgot to thank everyone who contributed to one of his shows, no matter how humble their role.

We all depend on each other...We are all important to God.

### **Conclusion**

**Going back to these poppy seeds:- They are no good unless we do something with them – plant them!**

**Likewise with our lives if we make no effort to nurture our talents, put them to good use and follow Jesus our lives will not bear fruit/flowers/be productive either!**

**I think most of us would expect most seeds to germinate and grow – giving us Spring flowers – so surely we should have faith in Jesus too?**

**Remembering:-**

**He did not die – He is Risen!**

**Maybe when we see poppies growing and flowering in all their glorious colour it will help us to remember this!**

**A prayer to finish:-**

***Lord, you entered into the world and became flesh so that the love which abides in the world could still be seen and felt. By your grace, enable us to***

***enter into your healing life with loving and caring action, as your Spirit shall lead.***

***Amen***

***(CARA)***