

LOCKDOWN DAY 111 – 15 JULY 2020

Molweni dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Matthew 13:1-9

Hymn: *All creatures of our God and King*

On this 111th day of Lockdown, I encourage you to make a study of Psalm 111. Those who have DSTV, do listen to Miss Universe, Zozibini Tunzi of South Africa, as she speaks on Fullview on Channel 404 at 8 pm tonight. Pass the message on to the young people. She is speaking as part of the run up to Mandela Day this weekend. Friends, keep up with handwashing, social distancing and wearing of masks. South Africa has the 8th highest confirmed cases of Coronavirus infections, in the world. Lord, heal our world of this pandemic. Lord, we pray for a speedy recovery for all those affected and infected by Covid-19 in our Diocese.

I now offer another reflection on Matthew 13:1-9, with the theme of **Listening**.

It is well known to those of us who grow things, whether in a plant box or garden, that we need to nourish the soil in order for plants to flourish. We can even recycle household waste to fertilise the plants. However good the quality of seed, a rich harvest cannot be achieved without good soil in which to sow it.

In Jesus' day sowing seed was haphazard. Weeds, most commonly a kind of thorn, were not cleared first, but ploughed into the ground. The paths through the fields became hard like roads, and seeds were scattered everywhere, on paths, edges and rocks covered in a thin layer of sand.

To **his listeners** Christ's description would have been instantly recognisable. He was illustrating his teaching with everyday events, through the language of work, of weather, of nature. Jesus was a country boy and much of his teaching involved the use of symbols taken from nature; he spoke the people's own kind of language, and so they **listened** to him.

It is easy to become distracted when people speak in a way which does not relate to us, to our needs and to our lives; Parents, educators, friends, preachers, counsellors, spouses, experience that those we are speaking to are **listening** but not **absorbing** what is said, or they miss the crucial heart of a message; which is what happened to many of Jesus' **listeners**. Some **listened** but did not want to know. Some **heard** but did not understand. Some **listened** and **heard** but were too frightened of the challenge to respond. Jesus prepared the ground in the way in which a person of the earth would do, with symbols which spoke to the experience and hearts of his **listeners**. He valued each person in that crowd and when we value someone, we take the trouble to approach them at their own level. The harvest of response we reap is worth every moment of effort.

We frequently fail to **listen** to one another, let alone to Christ! We avert our eyes, turn away our eyes or thoughts, use distracted sounds like, "Mmmm". We interrupt, not allowing others to finish. Do we really **listen**? How often do you telephone someone and know, by the noise in the background, that the television, computer, radio or someone else is claiming half their attention? How often do we ask people how they are because of social convention rather than wanting the truth and the detail of their answer?

If someone **listens** to us attentively, we feel valued. We grow in confidence and self-worth. This is how Christ **listens** to us and how we need **to listen** to him, not only in our prayers but as he speaks to us through others. By this **caring listening**, we nurture the seed of Christ's love which develops and grows into a part of his great harvest.

But if our soul is thin and rocky, what do we do? How do we compost it, how do we nourish it? We fertilize our soul by prayer, asking for enlightenment and wisdom, by a good deed, a kind word, sincere contrition for our weaknesses; not by heavy and self-congratulatory penances, but paying close attention to the ordinary events of our daily lives; by being **fully present** to each person, **hearing** his or her spoken and unspoken needs. Our compost involves facing and not avoiding life's unpalatable aspects for fear of them troubling us; it involves rising to the challenge of being fully human in the way which Jesus made transparently clear. This is the spiritual fertilisation given by God. When we accept it, it nourishes the life of God within us and within others.

God is with us in the great and in the small events of our lives. God speaks to us in gentle tones and in a language we understand. **Listen to** God our Parent, who is the sower, the seed and the food for growth. Relax: the harvest will take care of itself.

Today, please **reach out** to someone who has encouraged you and nurtured positive qualities in your heart and interior land of your life. Also **reach out** to someone in need of a **listening** ear, starting in your own household.

Prayer :

Sower of Seeds, you have planted in our hearts the potential for many gifts of your love to grow and ripen. Charity, authenticity, mercy, honesty, humility, forgiveness, loyalty, patience, understanding, courage, kindness, faith, listening, respect and other qualities reflective of your goodness dwelling in our interior fields and garden. We spend time today to recall what has grown and matured. We exult in the diversity and richness of our inner harvest and offer you our gratitude.

Amen

I am, Because We Are, Because God is.....Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Keep listening!*