

Many people watching our YouTube clips of services made during the lock down have admired the view of the garden from the Rectory. I thought I would deliver the sermon for this service from the vegetable patch at the bottom of the garden.

I'm not a great gardener but this is a part of the garden that I really enjoy. I get a great kick out of eating stuff that I have grown in this patch of ground. We have salads, rhubarb, leeks, potatoes, peas, bean and even some raspberries. We not only save money but it all tastes lovely.

Now of course you have to put some work into it. When we came here the soil was not great, a lot of clay that made it hard to dig and hard to drain. And there were lots of roots of things like bramble, bind weed, nettles, thistles and more besides. So over the years I have dug it over and over again, clearing out all the roots and digging in lots of compost from the kitchen and garden as well as a load of manure.

And now the soil is a lot better, much easier to dig and a lot more productive. Now I didn't come down here just to show off my vegetable patch.

We've just heard the Parable that Jesus told of a farmer who went out to sow his seed. Some fell on the path, some fell on stony ground, some among weeds – it just didn't grow. But the seed that fell on the good soil produced an amazing crop, making up for all the seed that had been lost.

This leaves me thinking about my life of faith. What sort of soil do I provide in my life for the seeds that God plants, seeds of teaching, seeds of love? Am I good soil, rocky soil, soil smothered with weeds? Do I spend my time worrying about things that are not really important – have I got the smartest clothes, the latest video games, the coolest sports kit?

A lot of you have missed your sport, the teams you play in. You know that if you are going to get better at your sport then you are going to have to spend time training and practising.

To go back to my vegetable patch, I've had to spend time cultivating it, preparing it to receive the seeds, the seedlings I've planted in it. If we are going to grow in our faith, we need to spend time, time to be quiet, time to think, time to listen, time to pray. The writer of the letter of James in our Bibles has some very simple advice: 'Draw near to God and he will draw close to you.' It is not that God stays away – he just wants to be let in.

I just want to finish with a lovely old prayer, one of the Collects out of our Prayer Book that is associated with our reading of the Bible:

Blessed Lord,  
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:  
help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them  
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,  
we may embrace and for ever hold fast  
the hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

I love the way in which those words roll off the tongue:-

help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them  
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,  
we may embrace and for ever hold fast  
the hope of everlasting life,

Take time, to reflect, to savour, to absorb.

‘Draw near to God and he will draw close to you.’ Let him in, let him plant his seed, and let it grow.