



## The seed of Christ within

An address for the Cosmic Mass ● 16<sup>th</sup> November 2008 ● Rev Louise

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.*

*John 15:1-8*

I'm going to read from Matthew 13, the Parable of the Sower. It's a very familiar passage and the question that has been on my mind for each one of us is: What are you doing with the seed of Christ that is within you? This seed is within each of us so I want us to consider what is happening with this seed.

*A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.*

*Matthew 13:3b-9*

In our time we have come to realise how important and precious seeds are. You've probably heard of seedbanks; they are storage facilities, some of them enormous vaults, that have been built around the world to store and protect varieties of seeds. All kinds of seeds.

They are stored for their protection because many plants that have been developed over centuries are becoming rare because of the way agriculture is organised nowadays. They are also guarded against catastrophic events like natural disasters, outbreaks of disease or war. The seeds are available for planting in case seed reserves elsewhere are destroyed.

Seeds can be very resilient. They can stay dormant and remain viable for hundreds and even thousands of years. I was reading about the oldest seed that has been grown into a viable plant. It was a Judean date palm seed about 2,000 years old.

One of the seedbanks is an amazing vault that has recently been built in Norway (The Svalbard International Seed Vault). It has been built inside a mountain in a man-made tunnel on a frozen island. It is designed to survive a range of catastrophes such as nuclear war. The

area is permanently frozen which will keep the vault below freezing point, and the seeds are protected by 1-metre thick walls of steel-reinforced concrete.

Great care is taken to ensure they survive and are available if needed. These seeds are not for growing.

### **The Seed of Christ**

The seed we'll look at today is the seed of Christ. We know that since Golgotha the seed of Christ is within us. This seed has already been planted and it is within our being. This seed is not one to be stored and lie dormant but it is intended to grow now, to take root within us and bear fruit. A question for each one of us is: What is happening with this seed? Is it growing?

A seed is a potential, a possibility; its growth is not guaranteed. It requires certain nutrients, nourishment and conditions in order to grow. We are responsible for this seed's growth and for providing the nourishment and creating the conditions which will allow it to grow, reach its potential and become alive within us.

The seed contains knowledge about what it is to become, which we cannot see from looking at it. For each one of us this Christ seed is ready to grow, blossom and bear fruit. If it remains in seed form it cannot grow to fruition, and we will never know what we might become. The spirit of Christ will lie dormant and unrealized within us.

### **Seeds falling**

One of the first things we notice in this parable is that the seeds *fall* into several places. It interests me that they fell – how could this happen? Why were they allowed to fall? Is this a careless sower? Their sowing was haphazard, accidental, left to chance.

We can say that some care needs to be taken to ensure growth. Some planning and preparation is needed. We need to pay attention to what is happening to this seed rather than leave it to chance.

### **Inward and outward movement**

Also, we need to consider what it needs. When seeds sprout and grow there is growth upwards and downwards. They form roots downward into the soil. From here they receive nourishment and become steadfast and strong, able to face the elements.

They also grow upward and outward into the air. From here again, they receive nourishment, but there is also blossoming and bearing fruit. The seed reveals itself, is able to become itself. We see its nature and expression. It is here we see what it produces and creates; it has a fruit or a harvest that is available for others.

So when a seed grows, there is part that we can see and part that we cannot see. Perhaps we could think of this as an invisible or inner growth and an outer or visible manifestation in the bearing of fruit and grain.

For the Christ seed to grow into what it can be, both these aspects need attention. Our inner and outer life are involved and a necessary part of the process. Preparation and nourishment of our inner soul life as well as the outward conditions are needed for this seed of Christ to grow and to manifest and express itself.

The Parable of the Sower lets us know some of the places where planting the seed is unhelpful to us.

### **Fell along the path**

The first few seeds fall on the path where they are devoured by birds. We well know that a path is not a suitable place to plant a seed. A path is for walking and activity, for getting from one place to another. A seed cannot grow on a path; it will be trampled underfoot as it tries to grow and also, as the parable tells us, it will become feed for birds; it is too exposed to whatever comes along.

This tells us that the seed of Christ cannot grow when we plant it on a path that is already laid down by us, on a path that we already walk, on a path that we have devised for ourselves. This is trying to fit the Christ seed into our life and for our purposes. When we do this we are using the Christ spirit for ourselves, for our own purposes. The seed becomes fodder for what we want and think we need.

The seed is not allowed to grow in accordance with its real purpose but is used for our purposes. It cannot grow and come to life in us but will be used by us (devoured). We can recognize this in ourselves. We might notice that we sometimes force our way through life – trying to force and fit situations and people to what it is we want or have decided for ourselves is the path for us. In so doing, we devour this Christ seed rather than being allowed to grow as it might and reach its true nature and potential. And it is lost to us.

### **Fell on rocky ground**

The second few seeds fall onto rocky ground. Here, they cannot take root and so are not able to withstand the intensity of the sun and are scorched and wither.

A seed needs to be able to take root so the plant can take in nourishment and become strong. This is the downward or inner movement and growth of the seed. The strengthening of ourselves and our soul requires the capacity to nourish this inner life, to have a depth of inner life.

One of the challenges of allowing this seed of Christ to grow within us is that we are changed. New purposes and abilities will become realised and visible.

However, if we harden ourselves the seed cannot take root. We need to be able to leave behind old ideas and preconceptions of who we are and what we will become. The hardness of these will not allow the seed to grow, to penetrate and enter into our being. It cannot grow when we have decided already what it will look like and what it will mean.

And if we have not become strong we will not be able to handle the elements – the difficulties and challenges, the disappointments and sorrows designed to make us more able to be a suitable place for the seed of Christ to grow and manifest.

The seed cannot grow if we are holding on to preconceived ideas of what we will become. We need to release ourselves, free ourselves of old ideas and be willing to enter into the growing life and vision of the seed. We do this by developing a rich inner life that nourishes this seed.

### **Fell upon thorns**

The seeds also fall upon thorns and so are choked. There isn't any room or space for the upward and outward growth and movement of the seed. If we allow situations in our outer lives, jobs, relationships, to take over our lives there won't be space for the growing of this seed of Christ. Other aspects of life can take our attention and energy and grow leaving no space for this small seed.

So we have to take care to put our energy and attention into this seed and its growing rather than the other things that can seem important and take over. No fruit or grain will be borne from this despite our energy and attention being directed there. The thorns tell us that something does indeed grow from this energy and attention but it is not of value, it does not bear fruit or grain, but rather chokes the real life that is trying to manifest.

### Challenges of the Parable of the Sower

Some questions present themselves to us as we contemplate this passage and the seed of Christ that is within us:

- What kind of sower of the Christ seed are we? Are we prepared, caring for the seed and our souls or do we leave it to chance?
- Do our own devisings and purposes devour the seed?
- Are we willing to leave behind preconceived ideas and be changed?
- Where is our attention and energy going? Are we distracted?

### Good soil

A seed requires good soil and space to grow. The Christ seed needs us to pay attention and take care of our soul. The seed needs space to be able to reach out, down and up, inward and outward. A willingness to set purposes of our devising aside to listen to the growing life of Christ within us and follow where this leads. We need a willingness to change and leave behind preconceived notions and to nourish this seed within us. And we need to keep the vision clear – pay attention to Christ and place our energy with this growing seed of life within us.

Further along in Matthew 13:32 he is speaking of the mustard seed: *It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.* When it is sown in good soil it produces and provides and it becomes much more than could be predicted by looking at the smallness of it in seed form.

When this occurs, there is an abundance of life, an increase up to a hundredfold of resources and life. When plants grow they create more seeds and so even more is created when we grow this seed of Christ within us.

### The hope of glory

Paul tells us that this seed, Christ in us, is the hope of our glory. Everyone, each one of us, has the seed of Christ within. Paul writes about this in his Letter to the Colossians. He is referring to his purpose when he writes:

*...to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great...are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:25b-27*

This glory is our individuality in Christ. It is the dignity of our I AM. The seed contains the potential that we cannot see from looking at it. It will grow into its true nature and being with purposes and abilities if we allow it; it is realised and visible when this seed is grown within us.

For each one of us the question is: what are you doing with the seed of Christ? Does it have space to grow within you? As the passage from John 15, *I am the true vine*, tells us, when we grow this seed and bear fruit we show ourselves to be disciples of Christ.

So shall it be.

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