

Surf Coast Uniting Churches



Sunday 12th July 2026



Introit 768 Praise God

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise God, all creatures here below,
praise God above, you heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Thomas Ken 1637-1711 *alt.*

Welcome

Introduction to Winter Sabbath, the time we stay in our warm nests and read, ponder and go deeper with our faith

Acknowledgement

This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here. We acknowledge the Wadawurrung people, traditional custodians of this land under God.
We commit ourselves again to working for reconciliation in this land.

Call to Worship

Creator God

We glory in the gift of God

May we love and trust you all the days of our life

May we open our hearts to hear your Words

May your words be written on our hearts

Through scripture, word and song.

Prayer

Lord your words are life and light for our soul
 You are like a lamp in a dark place
 Guiding us through life

Lord, your teachings offer profound truth and insights into how to live well and be blessed
 and a blessing for others, to you Lord.

Lord, you want what's best for us, to see us grow and reach our full potential
 You give each one of us a great and wonderful gift

You want to see us sing our song, to grow and blossom, no matter what age we are
 You want us to bear fruit that blesses others and builds up your kingdom,
 Fruit such as joy, peace, love and faith

You Lord, love each one of us and send your spirit upon us when we pray
 Your grace helps us understand your teachings

Your words are like a ship's rudder, guiding us through the ocean of life,
 anchoring us in God

Your church is like a ship upon a vast ocean blown about by the winds of Spirit of God
 Lord, we praise and love you. Amen

Prayer of Confession and Quiet moment

You're invited to bring all that is on your heart to God
 Asking for a fresh start and a new beginning or healing and wholeness or forgiveness

Hear then Jesus Christ's words of grace to you
 "Your sins are forgiven"
 Thanks be to God



RCL

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

- 13:1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.
- 13:2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.
- 13:3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow.
- 13:4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up.
- 13:5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil.
- 13:6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away.
- 13:7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.
- 13:8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
- 13:9 If you have ears, hear!"
- 13:18 "Hear, then, the parable of the sower.
- 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.
- 13:20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,
- 13:21 yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.
- 13:22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.
- 13:23 But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Hymn 232 O the Deep, Deep love of Jesus

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
 vast, unmeasured, boundless, free,
 rolling as a mighty ocean
 in its fullness over me.
 Underneath me, all around me,
 is the current of his love;
 leading onward, leading homeward
 to that glorious rest above.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus
 spread his praise from shore to shore;
 he who loves us ever loves us,
 changes never, nevermore;
 he who died to save his loved ones
 intercedes for them above;
 he who called them his own people
 watches over them in love.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
 love of every love the best;
 vast the ocean of his blessing,
 sweet the haven of his rest.
 O the deep, deep love of Jesus
 for my heaven of heavens is he;
 this my everlasting glory:
 Jesus' mighty love for me.

Samuel Trevor Francis 1834-1925 *alt.*

Sermon – The parable of the Sower

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen



A parable is said to be like a puzzle, a riddle or enigma. It is meant to make a point. It can bring upheaval to our everyday values, norms and everyday ways of living. It can shock us and make way for fresh insights and revelations.

There may even be a play upon words in today's parable. Grains such as wheat have ears, the head or spike of the plant which holds the seeds. Each ear of wheat or barley has 40-50 seeds. That's a lot of fruit.

The parable calls us to listen with our ears to Jesus words. He begins his parable by saying "Listen!" ... "If you have ears hear!"

That can be difficult for us as we age. Some of us have hearing issues and need hearing aids. We know about the struggles of not hearing in crowds or above loud sounds. We know how important it is to listen and to hear.

The parable is about sowing seeds; in the hope they will grow into a crop that will feed people.

Jesus watched the farmers sow seeds. They threw them all over the place in their fields. They were casual about where the seeds went and simply trusted in nature to do the nurturing. Hoping the seeds would take root in good soil and bear fruit.

Jesus spoke words to the people, to everyone who came, hoping they would take root in their hearts. It's a bit like throwing words all over the place, wherever he went, hoping those who listened would bear fruit.

Jesus cared about people's wellbeing and treated them with respect. He wants all of us to grow to our full potential where we bear fruit for the kingdom of God. Where we bear fruit like seeds in the field of God, in our hearts.



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The kind of fruit bearing Jesus hopes for in each one of us is where we follow his example. Where we follow in his footsteps, wanting the best for one another, coming alongside one another, encouraging those with the gifts for a ministry to grow and blossom and lead. Excelling in the ministry we are good and gifted for, so others are blessed. Being a blessing to others by thinking of their needs and acting in selfless ways, not being motivated by self-interest and power over others. That is the example Jesus set for us.

I wonder how the parables apply in our lives today.

We have entered a time of winter Sabbath, when things slow down along the Surf Coast. There are less people and more space to ponder in our warm nests at home or as we walk along beaches or through the bush. More opportunity to listen with our hearts to what God wants to say to us.

I invite you to pray, have a conversation with God and listen with your hearts. Ponder about the parables and try and work out, with the help of prayer and the Holy Spirit, what they are saying to you.

Today's gospel introduces a series of parable that Jesus offered crowds sitting on the beach while he taught from a boat, just near the shoreline. Our winter sabbath is an invitation to spend time doing some heartfelt deep work of coming to understand Jesus' words.

So here we are, a group of puzzlers embarking on a journey during winter.

Jesus is calling us to go deeper within ourselves and inviting us to question our motives, our place in the world and what we do with our lives.

Perhaps his words will change our hearts and lives.

Perhaps you are familiar with his parable. You may have heard it all your life, repeatedly. Sometimes being familiar can blind us, to what is really there. Sometimes when we slow down and pray, we see some things for the first time, where they have always been there, but we've rushed by and missed seeing them. Has that ever happened to you?

When we see them, it's like they haven't moved, we have. It may be a nest in a tree or a beautiful plant or a pathway through the bush. Something in us has changed and we become more self-aware and it helps us feel more settled and see things more clearly. We may feel deeply moved when we discover our true gift, the one we have buried within ourselves most of our life and now in the twilight of our life God is urging us to embrace it and live it out and sing our song. It is never too late in the kingdom of God.

So, let's look at this parable.



RCL

The birds ate up seeds that fell on shallow ground. Some hearts didn't listen and allow Jesus' teachings to take root. Some seed fell on rocky ground, hearts that were hardened to Jesus words and were not receptive to his call to live differently. They didn't water their spiritual garden with prayer, and the seed withered away. They were not receptive to his call to live differently. Some seeds fell among thorns, thorns in people's hearts which choked the word and were resistant to responding and change.



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But some people prayed and longed for a different way. Perhaps they were not happy with their lives and felt unsettled. When they heard Jesus' teachings, his words took root in their hearts and they bore abundant fruit. They watered their gardens with prayer and were blessed and a blessing to others, and most of all to God.



RCL adapted

When we bear fruit such as love, joy, peace and faith, everyone around us knows. They feel and see it in us. They know we pray and are close to God and want what's best for them, like Jesus does for us. They know us by our fruits. They know we are genuine and care about their wellbeing and are selfless and don't act out of self-interest, which can wound us.

That is what Jesus words do for us.

It is by the grace of God, not our own efforts, that we come to understand the parables in our hearts and come to live them out in our lives. Grace is the unmerited love of God that is poured into our hearts, when we pray. It is by God's grace; we come to understand the parables.

The Lord be with you

Offering

Lord, giver of every good thing, we bring to you our lives, gifts and resources for the building up of your kingdom and church. We give thanks for blessings and transformation that come through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

Prayers of the people

Prayers for those amongst us suffering and doing it tough
For those in the community who are hungry, cold and homeless
For those undergoing tests, medical treatment and recovering

The Lord's prayer

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen**

Hymn 599 Take my life and let it be



RCL

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King.

Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold, nothing, Lord, would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love: my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal 1836-79 alt.

Blessing

May the blessing of the Holy Spirit be upon you
God's love and Light within you
In all your comings and goings
May you ever have a kindly greeting
From any you meet along the road

Hymn 779 May the feet of God

May the feet of God walk with you,
and his hand hold you tight.
May the eye of God rest on you,
and his ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you,
and his breath give you life.
May the Child of God grow in you,
and his love bring you home.

Aubrey Podlich 1946-

