



Introduction

These weeks of Cloistering have reminded us that economics, however important, are not everything and have helped remind us of the priorities of our hearts. Have a think of what you most appreciated about these weeks and what you most missed.

Over the past weeks there has been a lot about priorities. It is good to know ourselves and know our hearts. The Bible encourages us to reflect on ourselves, It is not wrong to think *of I and My* as well as *You or Them*.

There are priorities that I choose and there are priorities that arise out of my personality and being *Me*. The Gospel passage about the Sower is really about being Good Soil. Deborah and Jennie have been replanting over these weeks. We had to get fresh compost – good soil is necessary for growth. I want us to look for lessons about growth from these readings.

✘ THE PSALM 119.105-112 ɳ Nun

✦ **The Bible is to be our guide:** ¹⁰⁵ *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.* It is of little use on a shelf.

✦ **Right promises and vows:** ¹⁰⁶ *I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. And ¹¹² My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.*

✦ **Be thankful:** ¹⁰⁸ *Accept, LORD, the willing praise of my mouth* in the midst of suffering and vulnerability

✦ **Learn to be happy about the right things:** ¹¹¹ *Your statutes are my heritage for ever; they are the joy of my heart.* I think that to a certain extent happiness or joy is a learned way of being and it flows out of the previous attitudes of commitments and thankfulness.

✘ OLD TESTAMENT READING Genesis 25.19-34

✦ **Wisdom and Humility:** In this story we have a divided family and partiality – Rebecca preferred Jacob and Isaac preferred Esau. This is a recipe for family disaster. There are times when we may find one child easier than another for all sorts of reasons – not just because of them, but it can be because of what we are going through. It is important though that we see to enable each child to feel loved in their own right. What are the lessons for growth in this? I suggest it is to act wisely. These parents in preferring one to the other were actually showing a rift in their relationship. A Jewish paraphrase of the 7th Commandment says: **7 - seven rhymes with heaven, isn't it heaven when your parents get on well.** Our passage shows us that they were people of prayer ... but they still got it wrong. None of us will ever be perfect parents – we are flawed and therefore our parenting will be flawed. Humility acknowledges when we get it wrong and encourages us to work at our defects.

✘ NEW TESTAMENT READING

Romans 8.1-11

✦ **Freedom:** ⁸ *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,* This is the removal of guilt, the reason for absolution, the mighty power of forgiveness, the joy of salvation, the freedom before God from our past and the bitterness that often accompanies unresolved feelings of failure and negativity. Our freedom was won by Christ and the Holy Spirit makes it real in our lives. ² **because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.** The Holy Spirit is called both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ as well as the Spirit in his own right.

✦ **Discipline:** We are told that. ⁵ ... *those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.* ⁶ ... *the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.* ... Then it says: ¹⁰ *But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life*



✘ **GOSPEL** Matthew 13.1-9,18-23

So we come to the famous parable of the sower. We could go into this in details but I simply want us to note what takes away from growth and therefore what leads to growth:

V19 Do not allow the seed sown in our hearts to be snatched away

V21 Let us make sure that what we believe is rooted in us and not allow ourselves to be superficial in our faith

V22 Do not let the *worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth* so fill our hearts and minds that it chokes what is good

V23 Let us aim to *hear and understand* – this takes some work and some focus. This is the way to grow.

FINALE: 10 Qualities for Growth: How to be good soil ... how to be good spouses, parents, friends, employers, employees:

- ⊕ The Bible as our guide
- ⊕ The right promises and vows
- ⊕ Be thankful
- ⊕ Happy about the right things
- ⊕ Wisdom and Humility
- ⊕ Freedom
- ⊕ Discipline
- ⊕ Guard what we learn, aim to *hear and understand*
- ⊕ No superficiality
- ⊕ Refuse to allow worry or things of this world to govern us

This all takes work and focus but it is the way to grow, become fruitful
and the sort of person God wants us to be.

Revd John Chapman, July 2020

