

**Address – 26/10/25****Bible Sunday 2025**

Isaiah 55:10-11

Matthew 13:3-9,18-23

Address (part 1) - 'God speaks and things happen'

Hands up who likes to grow things in their garden, or perhaps in pots in a greenhouse, or even inside.

What do you need for things to grow? [seed, soil, light, water, care...]

It's not just plants that grow. People and animals and birds and fish and insects grow too and they also need the right conditions in order to thrive.

You could say the same about everything that happens in the world and throughout the universe. There is a starting point – like a seed – and then other forces act either to help or to hinder growth.

The Bible tells us that it is when God speaks that things happen. God's Word is like a seed that is planted and things grow from it.

At the very beginning of the Bible it says: "God said, 'Let there be light' and there *was* light." (Gen.1:3) God went on to say: "Let us make human beings to be like us... and it happened." (Gen.1:26)

Further on in the Bible we are told that when Jesus came to the earth, He spoke and amazing things happened. He told sick people to be healed and they got better (Matthew 8:13). He was on a boat once in a storm and He told the wind to stop and suddenly it died down (Mark 4:39). He even told a dead man to come out of his tomb once and it happened (John 11:43). Even more amazing than planting a seed and a plant growing, when God speaks, things happen.

We're going to be thinking this morning about ways in which God's Word brings new life.

## Stories from around the World

I'd like to introduce you to some people from around the world whose lives have been changed for the better as they have heard God's speaking to them through the Bible.

### 1. This is Martina from Argentina

Martina had the anguish of seeing her home ravaged by floods. Yet, amidst the chaos, she found great comfort in the pages of the newly translated New Testament in her native West Toba language.

Martina's heart lifted as she turned each page, feeling a sense of peace and hope wash over her. Her Bible became her constant companion, guiding her through life's darkest valleys and highest peaks. Through its teachings, Martina found the strength to forgive, to love and to persevere.

*'Before, I had the Bible in Spanish, but I didn't understand it. The New Testament gives me peace and joy when I read it. I feel it is a companion to me. I am a new Martina because of the New Testament in my language'.*

### 2. Bounnoy from Laos

Bounnoy was controlled by his addiction to drinking and drugs. He desperately wanted to leave those things behind, but nothing he tried could cure him.

During those dark days, his wife continuously prayed and encouraged him to come to church with her.

Finally, Bounnoy agreed to go and as he listened he was amazed by what he heard. He heard the Good News about Jesus and asked Christ to be His Saviour and Lord. Every day for two months he asked God to cure him of his addiction and from then on, he didn't go back to his old way of life. Instead of drinking and taking drugs he wanted to serve the Lord and is now a Deacon in his local church. Imagine how happy his wife is!

*'I am changed by reading many passages from the Bible, and I find encouragement in the Word. It gives me life and has changed my life.'*

### 3. Fiddes from Malawi

Fiddes faced a number of tragedies in her life. Heartbroken and

overwhelmed by grief, she withdrew to a very dark place, her marriage began to break down and she even tried to take her own life. But her family was given a Bible by the Bible Society of Malawi. First of all she was very hesitant, but a single verse in the Bible spoke to her heart - 1 Peter 5:7 - 'Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you.' She immersed herself in the Bible and, trusting in the Lord, her suicidal thoughts waned, replaced by newfound inner peace.

*'I no longer cry as I used to. My family has been brought together because of this Bible. If not for the Bible, I would have committed suicide by now.'*

#### 4. Hanna from Bangladesh

In many places around the world people are facing really difficult situations and they sometimes need help to work through their pain and their memories.

The Bible Society has developed a programme of Trauma Healing that is led by trained facilitators and enables people to discover the reality of God's love and the fact that God has a plan for each one of us. It has been used in all kinds of situations including right now in Gaza. We have even run it locally and there are plans to run it again in the new year at Orwell Church.

*Hanna from Bangladesh says: 'It helped me to find release from the sufferings that I had been bearing for a long time. Although I lost my earthly father, I have a heavenly father who is always caring for me.'*

#### 5. Phil from Scotland

Phil was one of the first parents to register his baby son Lucas for the Bibles for Bairns project. Bibles for Bairns is free for any baby born in Scotland. Registration for babies born in 2025 is now open.

Once registered the baby receives a birthday gift every year until they are five. On his first birthday Lucas enjoyed opening his beautifully wrapped birthday gift - a Share a Story Bible!

Phil said: *'One thing we look forward to as parents is reading stories to our son. We're excited to discover God together*

*through the big story of the Bible. Bibles for Bairns is such a wonderful way to help us do this from the earliest age.'*

Some families have a Christian faith while others don't, but still like the idea of their little ones getting to know Bible stories. Through this scheme which provides age-appropriate books through the first five years of a child's development any family can enjoy free colourful Bibles and Bible activity books. Having something that's free and available to all gives everyone the opportunity to explore faith. It's supported by the Church of Scotland Guild including our own branch in Kinross-shire.

So, there are some examples from all over the world of how God's Word is changing lives for the better. It changes the lives of individuals and sometimes whole communities and nations. A word can bring healing, reconciliation and peace and gives cause for rejoicing.

Address (part 2) – 'Words for a Waiting World' – Alan Reid  
In our Bible reading this morning the image of sowing seed and reaping a harvest is used to describe the impact of God's Word in the world:

'As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.' (Isaiah 55:10-11)

Have you ever seen pictures of a desert coming to life after rain? You can view time lapse videos online. It's incredible. A dry, dusty barren place suddenly springs to life when the rains come.

People in Judah knew that although the land looked barren, there would be fresh life when the rains came: 'the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish' (Isaiah 55:10).

There was a certainty in their part of the world that when the rain came, a harvest came and Isaiah explains that there is similar certainty when God's Word comes to a people and to a land. When God's word comes, life springs up, 'So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty' (v11).

Perhaps we look at our world today in all its barrenness: nations scarred by war and want; crimes and cruelty that mar humanity. We begin to lose hope that anything can change these things. But God's word, when it comes, always brings abundant, overflowing, transformed life. Bible Societies all over the world share the same testimony: God's word is changing lives. And the same is true here in Scotland. Maybe you can't see it.

Have you ever taken part in a sunflower competition? (You get people to plant sunflower seeds in June, and at the end of August you see who has the tallest sunflower.) The problem is that when you plant a sunflower seed nothing seems to happen, at least not very quickly. You put it in a flower pot and, literally, nothing! In this day of instant delivery of just about everything, no one likes to wait. Yet patience is rewarded with a harvest and sunflowers are absolutely amazing when they start to grow.

One of the most long-term works of faith in planting God's word is the work of Bible translation. It takes people time to learn a language. Translation of the New Testament into a new language takes years; the whole Bible, a maybe ten years. It's a patient, faithful work of waiting. But it is rewarded with a harvest. Once a people have the Bible in their language, abundant, overflowing, transformed life becomes possible in whole communities and nations. That work is going on all over the world today and although it sometimes seems that nothing is happening under the surface and then more obviously a miracle is underway.

A seed planted in the ground is a tiny but visible testimony to the work of God in creation. Seeds contain life itself, with an inbuilt ability to multiply to yield, 'Seeds for the sower and bread for the eater' (v10). While all sorts of calculations and measurements can be made, while much can be done to influence the soil and make the best of the conditions, ultimately harvest depends upon the seed – a gift from God over which we have no control.

God's word also – like a seed - always has the potential for abundant, overflowing, transformed life. A recent report by the Bible Society in England and Wales - 'The Quiet Revival' – speaks of a surge in the number of young people reading the Bible and attending church. In the last ten years in Scotland, it is reported that the number of 18–24-year-olds attending church has increased three times. A staggering 1 in 4 of this age group read the Bible at least once a month. Story after story speaks of the impact of God's word on this younger generation and that is certainly evidenced in the work of KYTHE here in Kinross-shire.

Many are asking, 'How has this happened? What methods are working? What resources are making a difference?' and it's good to ask these questions, to do what we can to influence the soil to receive the seed, to make the best of the conditions. But ultimately, the power is with God. It is God who is in control of the harvest, and what we are seeing is a harvest that always comes from the spreading of God's Word. When we place the Bible into people's hands and hearts – then abundant, overflowing, transformed life is always the outcome. For this is the very heart of God's desire revealed in Jesus Christ.

How are we involved in planting the seed of God's Word as a Church and in the Brigade? Are we praying for opportunities to give the Bible to others? Are we praying for whole nations (our own nation) to be changed by the Bible?

May we each know the wonder of God's word today, and the abundant, overflowing, transformed life it always brings. And may our hearts and hands be strengthened to do what we can to share the Bible where we are this week.