

# **Sermon on Wednesday 21 July**

## **by Rev. Bill Church**

*Readings: Exodus 16 & Matthew 13 (The Sower)*

Food is a major theme throughout the Bible –rules about what you can eat, sharing food and conversations as people eat together, abundant crops or failed harvests and so on.

In the Exodus reading, hardly had the Israelites been spectacularly rescued by God at the crossing of the Sea, then they complain about their desert rations, fondly remembering the culinary delights of Egypt despite being slaves there. In the Matthew reading, the sower gets a good yield from part of his effort but still loses three-quarters of his precious saved seed.

And at the heart of Christian worship is a shared meal, albeit that the food is now symbolic and spiritual.

The Bible records plenty of anxiety about food, mainly whether there will be enough or whether it is ritually tainted.

Our present society certainly thinks a lot about food. There are endless books and television programmes and YouTubes about cooking; a constant succession of cafes and restaurants offer the latest trendy cuisine; supermarkets compete to bring before us novelties and bargains.

But there is also anxiety about food in our country, not about an absolute lack of food as in the Bible and historically here, but anxiety about fair distribution and about whether what we eat is really wholesome and whether the wider environmental cost is affordable in the long term.

The recently published second part of the Dimbleby Report, "Developing a National Food Strategy" reflects and reinforces this anxiety and contains some radical ideas for improving food and farming and is worth looking at carefully and prayerfully. But I expect and fear that Henry Dimbleby's proposals will be like the seed sown by the sower.

Some will fall on the path and will be snatched away by those who, for their own political, financial or cultural reasons, cannot cope with them.

Some will fall on stony ground and will flourish only until some new focus attracts attention and their effect will wither away and become an historical footnote.

Some will fall among thistles and all the complexities and complications and discouragements of moving from idea to action will choke them.

Some will fall on good ground and yield a generous and lasting harvest.

Let us at least pray that there will be a decent proportion of good ground.