

Seeds

I spend a lot of time in my garden, especially recently; as I type I am under 'house arrest', following a ping on my phone. I have been fascinated by the success rate, or otherwise, of seeds; some larkspur and cornflowers that were sown last autumn are flowering beautifully, while others, Californian poppies and clarkia, sown in the spring have not shown up at all. Love in the mist, a prolific self seeder, is everywhere without my doing anything about it, except sow one packet many years ago.

Hope and disappointment: the twin emotions of many turbulent months. Some of our hopes, for a 'new different', are beginning to take shape as we can once more meet freely with friends, colleagues and loved ones without constantly having to do a head count. We can sing in church at last, albeit through masks, and tentatively hug those who wish to be hugged. Yet we have also grown accustomed to planning holidays, birthday parties, family gatherings and childcare only to find them cancelled and our plans in disarray. Weddings have been called off, operations postponed and Christmas plans disintegrated at the last minute. Like seeds planted in hope and optimism, they never materialised.

We don't know what lies ahead for us, even without a pandemic. A freak accident, the loss of a job, a terminal illness, can turn all our plans upside down, yet resentment does not make things better. The apostle Paul, writing from his unplanned prison chains, speaks of his joy. He exhorts his fellow believers to not be anxious, but thankful, and promises God's peace in return. He encourages them not to grumble, but to generously look out for each other. Paul had learnt the secret of letting go of any perceived entitlement to dictate his situation:

I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.

Philippians 4:11 -13

Joy, peace, freedom from anxiety – maybe these are the plants that I have never sown at all, yet have appeared nonetheless. A random day lily next to the fence, a couple of sunflowers in the middle of a border and a stunning variety of ornamental poppies, all over the place. I imagine the birds or the wind are the secret hand at work here, as the breeze of God's Holy Spirit drops his gifts into my life.

*Liz Jenkin, Elder
Great Shelford Free Church*