

The Briar And The Bramble

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; and then in their joy went and sold all that they had to buy that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:44-46)

Every year Simon Howell, the pioneer at St Laurence (aka. a very adventurous vicar who brings things into church you wouldn't expect), gives me & my creative partner, Tat Ozhiganova, a parable, then says:

"Make this into a circus show for everyone—faith or no faith." Easier said than done. But upon reading the "Pearl in the Field," it was immediately obvious: this year's show should celebrate the hidden pearls at the heart of nature.

Simon messaged me while I was watching Detectorists with my mum, who loves that show so much she'd probably leave my dad for either Mackenzie Crook or Toby Jones, or both. There's something safe, true, and right about its spirit—it's a refuge from the hustle and bustle of life.

Stroud holds a similar place in my heart. Working at Giffords was full of joy and excitement, but the most magical days were the days off—strolling through fields, surrounded by outstanding natural beauty, but also the understated tiny amazings of nature: leaves, bark, birdsong.

So this year's show is about the tiny amazing things in nature. Not just Stroud's stunning landscapes, but the everyday bits we walk past constantly: What does the bark of the town centre tree look like up close? What patterns do the leaves you trample reveal? What's hidden in the bushes at your bus stop? What treasures are there to be found every day, in the everyday?

Will you search through the loamy earth for me
Climb through the briar and bramble
I will be your treasure...
There's a place follow me
Where a love lost at sea
Is waiting for you"

Andy Bewley (Director)