



Praying Together



Number Thirteen

July 2020

Dear Friends,

What is your favourite parable I wonder? According to my research the Gospel of Luke contains 24 parables and the Gospel of Matthew 23, the Gospel of Mark contains 8, and the Gospel of John is written from a slightly different perspective and doesn't really do parables. You may know more than you think! The ones that immediately spring to mind for me are the parable of the good Samaritan, the return of the prodigal son, the parable of the sower, the lost sheep, the labourers in the vineyard.

Jesus's parables are memorable stories, often with imagery and all convey messages. The messages within these parables are central to the teachings of Jesus and he speaks of simple, everyday things that his listeners could readily relate to. For example, vineyards, wheat fields, olive trees, baking bread, sheep, goats, neighbours, being mugged and family relationships. I thought this week we might look at the parable of the sower found both in Luke and Matthew's Gospel, I am using the version from Matthew.

From the Bible: Matthew 13: 1-9

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!'

If you continue reading chapter 13 you will find Jesus's Disciples asking for an explanation as to why he uses parables, and also Jesus's own explanation of this parable in verses 18-23. We learn that the man sowing the grain represents God and his seed is His message. See how God spreads his seed abundantly, not just on the cultivated soil but on the path, on the rocky ground and amongst weeds. He wants everyone to receive his message so he sows it extravagantly and everywhere.

The seed that fell on the path was eaten by birds. These people hear the message but it is immediately lost because they are focussed on other things which are more important in

their lives. The seed that sprouts on the rocky ground represents those who, on hearing the word respond with initial enthusiasm but when the going gets tough, represented by the sun, they give up because the word did not sink in deep enough to sustain them through tough times.

The thorn bushes choke the message of God, it is heard, but people's concern for status, riches, materialism or worries cause the plants to die. The good soil represents people who hear the message and live it in their lives and pass it on to others. They have a strong faith even when the going gets tough and they share the message of God with others, thus producing more seed to be spread and heard.

For those gardeners amongst us, and I know there are a lot of you, this parable is one we can easily relate to. When I look back over the course of my own journey, I think I have probably been all of these soils at some point in my life. The sower keeps sowing, God's message is always being scattered, the nature of the soil can change. Have we got ears to hear?

Let us Pray:

Loving God, help us to be hearers of your word.

Give us ears to hear and good soil in which your word can grow.

With deep roots we can withstand difficulties that come our way,

We are able to draw on your strength and the belief that you are with us in all circumstances and situations.

Lord, we remember that you walk among the hurt and understand what it is to suffer. Comfort those who are in any sort of distress this day. We give thanks to all who work to alleviate suffering and all who offer a listening ear or a helping hand.

Lord, we ask that you gather to you all who cry out in their helplessness, that they might know your guidance, comfort and peace. We hold before you all who are suffering in any way from the effects of Covid-19, and pray for all who are working to help and support those in need, that you would bless and protect them. As lockdown starts to ease, we bring before you all who are anxious and fearful about the future.

We thank you for our families and friends and the safety of our homes. We remember those for whom relationships are difficult and for those whose relationships have broken down and also for all those who do not know the safety of a loving home or have no home to call their own.

Lord, we thank you for Marbury Parish and all who have worshipped and sown the seed of your message here throughout the years. We thank you for all who work to build up our community of faith and pray for its future.

Amen

"But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who bears fruit and yields..." (Matthew 13: 23)

Ali, on behalf of St Michael's Church, Marbury.