

Sermon 12th July 2026 - Parable of the Sower

Every 6 weeks or so I join with my wider family for a quiz night on zoom. It's lovely to connect with those in Cambridgeshire, Essex, and Rutland along with those living nearer. There are usually 6 of us, some couples, some playing singly, we have a round of 10 questions each, this last week my round was called 'What the hell does that mean'.

I had found some fabulous old English words that have fallen out of use and the others had to choose the correct answer from a choice of 3 options. Words such as THROTTLEBOTTOM - a great word that should be used, it means a dishonest public official. SCURRYFUNGIE, we've all been guilty of this, it's the hasty tidying up when unexpected guests call today that they are popping round. I can guarantee that we have all been SWULLOCKING these past few days, that is - finding ways to cope with the humid weather, and one that is just too perfect these days - TRUMPERY - it means - one which appears perfect but is, in fact, pretty useless and worthless. However, the word I identify with mostly today is ULTRACREPIDARIAN, that is, someone who gives an opinion on something that they know very little about. This is me today!!

I usually prefer to speak about the subject of the Sunday i.e Mothering Sunday. This week I've had to refer to the readings. I looked at them in order, firstly the OT, Genesis, Esau and Jacob, the story of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. A lot of themes to unpack here. Esau - adventurous, a good hunter, Isaac's favourite, founded Edom, chose the quick easy gratification for little effort with no thought for the long term effect e.g. he traded his birthright as firstborn to his younger brother for a bowl of stew! Jacob, born clinging to his brother's foot, favourite of Rebekah, quieter, studious, canny - look at how he gained his elder brother's birthright, cunning - he fooled his now blind father into getting the blessing meant for Esau, estranged from his family, married 3 times, had 1 daughter and 12 sons who went on to each lead one of the 12 tribes of Israel, and so it went on, too much for me to pull into a cohesive 10-12 minute talk, we'd have been here for hours. So onto St Paul's letter to the Romans, it is possible to segway from Genesis to Romans if you take the lesson from the letter and apply it to the aforementioned twins. The warnings about seeking immediate satisfaction of the fleshly desires, which does not please God, versus being led by the Holy Spirit which does please God. This tied me up in knots, Paul didn't use one simple phrase when several confusing ones would do to explain the same thing. I'll leave a discourse on that to the academic theologians.

Incidentally - interesting fact, Paul was thought to have written the letter to the Romans in about 57AD, the first recorded use of soap by the Romans was 50AD, I bet Paul was glad of that.

That left me with the parable of the sower, which incidentally can also be found in Mark and Luke. Jesus used parables as a way of teaching his listeners. Many of the masses of people who came to hear him were illiterate, story telling was an important, traditional way to pass on important messages. A parable reveals the truth to those who are prepared to really listen, simultaneously concealing the truth from those who are too lazy or stubborn to see it.

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It is a short everyday recognisable story to illustrate a spiritual truth. Many of the parables have recurring themes, simply because the message is not understood on the first telling, so an alternative is needed.

Rather than break the parable down and analyse each symbol or part I'm going to concentrate on one thing only, because I'm sure that everyone here knows and understands both the story and the message.

Are you ready? - Consider this, Who is the sower and what is being sown??

The sower is generally accepted to be God, this makes perfect sense. He is a sower of words, he's been communicating with his people for hundreds of years, via visions, prayers, prophets, scripture, he's left signs and warnings repeatedly and just like the telling of a parable, the message has not always been received or acted upon.

Others say that the seed God is sowing is his son. Having failed to convince people that obedience is the only way to heaven, Jesus was made human and sent to earth as a man to spread God's message.

But I ask - Why can't there be more than 1 sower? As Christians we are called upon to be sowers, to spread the truth of God's Grace and Love, to speak up about how Christ died for us, all of us, for each one of you sitting here today, to pay the price for our sins. Isn't that just so awesome?? So the sower doesn't have to be God, or Jesus, but you and me too. We can throw out seeds, (or words/actions in our case), too. Just like the seeds in the parable our seeds hold a lot of potential, they have all our hope, they are a commitment to the future, we need to spread them to every space that we possibly can.

BUT :- a warning!! Remember the saying - we reap what we sow. Are our seeds full of love, friendship, healing, honesty etc or are they full of judgement, hatred, fear, anger or resentment. You should expect the same in return. We're reminded of this in the Lord's Prayer when we say 'Forgive us as we forgive others'. If we freely and totally forgive others then we will receive the same from God.

I suspect that most of us are betwixt the two extremes. Most of our words & actions are fine, but sometimes a flash of anger surfaces and harsh words have escaped before we can stop them. It's human nature, but it does mean that there is work to be done to and by us. We need to strengthen our roots as if we are the good fertile soil by reading scripture and praying.

Do you choose where your words go? Do you only speak of your faith with other christians? Or do you randomly speak as often you can, are you enhancing or diminishing life with your sowing?

In today's lesson the sower doesn't mind where the seeds land because it's not about where they land but who the sower is. The sower makes no judgment on the quality or worthiness of the ground, it makes no odds because the message is the same, and the opportunity to receive the message is the same for everyone.

Despite the imagery of today's parable, it isn't about farming or gardening, we all know that, it's about you and me, our lives, our faith, our relationships, our communities and so much more. So come away from the agricultural scenario, concentrate on your words, actions and interactions. By all means speak to other Christians, it's good to speak to like minded people but also include the 'maybes', the 'not sures', and the 'non-believers'. It's not up to us to assign value, judge or separate our words according to our audience, we sometimes need to be daring and somewhat reckless in the spreading of the word.

We ought not to be discouraged by the reaction that we receive. Not everyone is ready to hear, some will get defensive, possibly aggressively so, but someone might just be ready to hear and take it further. So stop measuring and keeping score, all we can do is offer up the truth and then let it go.

In conclusion, try letting today's parable sit with you. Don't try to analyse what it means to you or how you can make it fit into your lives. Do nothing. Give it a chance to work out what it wants to do with us. Let it reveal something, sit and listen, - is it giving you a message? Asking a question? I don't know, that's for you to discern, and then answer the original question :- Who is the sower and what is being sown.

Amen

Pat Smith