



How do you feel?

- *Surprised?*
- *A bit cross?*

Parables (the stories of Jesus):

- Story with a sting in the tail
- Catch us off guard:
“... surely the next person will be one of my own ”
- A joke with a punchline – shouldn't require explanation

3 points about parables ...

1. Parables are designed to catch people off guard
- cause us to question our worldview
2. Parables draw us into a story – a time and a place
 - So it can be hard for us to get the full impact of a parable
 - BUT – we do like stories don't we!
 - Stories can teach us, enrage us, calm us, give us hope ... or destroy it
3. Parables ALWAYS call forth a response ...
IF we are listening

Here's Jesus on parables:



Today's Reading 1 - Matthew 13, from v10 - Parables

The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?'

He replied, 'Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.'

Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables:

'Though seeing, they do not see;

though hearing, they do not hear or understand.....

So is a parable like a riddle with a secret?

YES but:

- Always solvable by those with “ears to hear”
- Always hidden from those who do not

So parables both REVEAL and CONCEAL

- The power of story-telling reveals truth to some and conceals it from others – *until they are ready*
- It's a stroke of genius – and comes with a challenge: “Whoever has ears, let them hear” Matthew 11.15





Stories for ears to hear...



Stories for ears to hear...

The Parable of the Sower, *Matthew 13*

Today's Reading 2 - Matthew 13, 1-9 and 18-23 - The Parable of the Sower

*v1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. **Whoever has ears, let them hear.**'*

v18 'Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: when anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.'



Jesus uses people's life dependency on the land
to tell a story
Bit different today!



A landscape photograph featuring a field of purple seed pods in the foreground. The seed pods are in sharp focus, showing their elongated, cylindrical shape. In the background, there are rolling hills and a bright sun, creating a warm, golden glow across the scene. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The overall mood is serene and natural.

1 type of seed – 4 types of soil ...

*What is this seed
of “Good News”?*

*God is bringing back a
people who have grown
distant.*

*And he does it through
the death of his own
dear son.*



Start with the GOOD soil

- Good soil people
 - Want to be a follower of Jesus Christ, through thick and thin
 - Show fruit in their lives – even if they can't see it!

Many of us at LBC see ourselves as this soil ... but beware of complacency

HEARING SUBMITTING PERSEVERING

Roadside People

- Well trodden ground at the side
- They don't really want to know – thick skinned?
- Seed (God's word) can't take root
- The road has already decided where its going – doesn't want our help
- We all know such people



~~HEARING SUBMITTING PERSEVERING~~

Stony people

- These people have heard and respond – want to follow Jesus!
- But don't want to hand over control
- Just give God a corner of the plot
- One day the gloss wears off and – there's no roots – no character

Stony ground is more dangerous than the path

HEARING ~~SUBMITTING~~ ~~PERSEVERING~~

Thorny People ?

- This is GOOD SOIL! – can show growth for a time
- But ground is already occupied by something
- “Worries and the deceitfulness of wealth”
- When they come along It’s no competition

Weed infested ground is more dangerous than the path



HEARING SUBMITTING ~~PERSEVERING~~

Is it possible for me to be more than one type of soil

... at the same time?

1 type of seed - 4 types of soil - *but what does it mean for me?*

Who has a garden?

A garden can have all types of soil – at the same time:

- Roadside – not really listening / lazy
- Stones – we like the emotional fix on a Sunday but don't have the roots of discipleship
- Thorns – repeatedly giving in to things we should not ...

Not about occasional failings but habitual lack of discipleship



*Good soil doesn't stay good by itself.
It is the result of hard work. It must be
continually cleared of stones and nasty
weeds. It needs to be fertilised and
watered, dug and protected from
trampling.*

*The good ground in which the seed
flourished was well prepared and loved.
This was not chance or luck*

*Let's quickly look at those 3 problem-soils
again and think about ourselves ...*



Roadside / path (not hearing)

- Could it be that sometimes we are unreceptive to God (don't hear)?
- "Let's not bother with church (again)"
- Or we skip our personal time with God ... repeatedly
- Eventually WE become like the path
- *For Christians this is a parable about hearing*

QUESTION

Does your regular time with God get priority? Do you have places in your life to hear from God ... where?



Stones (no roots)

- Do we sometimes want the emotional fix of great worship OR the social side of church ... But NOT the hard work of discipleship?
- “God is just for Sundays”
- Our Christian lives become shallow - stones take over
- *“Trouble and persecution”*

QUESTION

Is there something getting in the way of my growth?



Thorns (wealth or worries)

- Preoccupation with the world around takes over
- Deceitfulness of wealth – “I would rather have my playthings ... than God”
- And of course, “worries”! Jesus tells us not to worry – that’s REALLY hard!

QUESTIONS

Do I go through life expecting no problems?

Am I thankful when things are well?



Top gardening tips!

- Sometimes there may be months, even years when our soil feels thorny or stony or more like the roadside
- What do we do?
 - *Prioritise your regular time with God. Have places in your life to hear from God.*
 - *Is there something getting in the way of my growth?*
 - *Expect some problems – its OK. And be thankful for all that is good.*

Top gardening tips!

AND REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT THE GARDENER!

- God is! Remember that!
- He makes the growth happen – our job is only to bring good soil

(That's really good news!)



Stories for ears to hear...