



HG227: Parables And Possessions The Parable Of The Sower

Matthew 13:1-23

Home Group Study Notes

12 September 2021 - Revd Christine Williams



**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!**

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins) *Ice Breaker*

Which plants in your garden have grown well this year, and which have been failures? Do you know why?



Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Home Group Sermon Notes

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Today we have the first of our home group series on the parables of Jesus. It is the story of the Sower; although when I say, ‘story’, it is not much of a story. A man sows some seed. Some of it grows and gives a good harvest and some of it doesn’t. Jesus explained that the seed was the good news of the kingdom and that some people hear the gospel and respond and others don’t. That’s it really. But this is a home group series sermon so we are digging a bit deeper than that. This parable comes in the early part of Jesus’ ministry while he is mainly in Galilee.

By the time he told the parable he had already sent out the twelve on a mission to the villages, but he had not yet been transfigured and Peter had not yet declared him to be the Christ. In Galilee people were largely friendly but most of them didn’t understand him. They were hoping for a Messiah but he was not quite what they are expecting. They crowded around him because he healed their sick friends and relations and they liked his stories. On this occasion there were so many people crowded around him, that Jesus used a boat as a pulpit.

Jesus said, ‘He who has ears, let him hear.’ Did not everybody hear what he said? We all know from our own experience that it is possible to attend church but not hear from God. We hear physically but do not always attend with our heart and mind. Jesus knows it too. But the parables of Jesus caught peoples’ attention and were remembered even if the whole point of the talk was not understood. The images in the parables are strong and still work today; we use them regularly. ‘She is a bit of a lost sheep’. ‘He was a Good Samaritan.’

Was Jesus deliberately hiding the meaning away from the crowds by telling them a story or was he simply being realistic about their ability to grasp what he was here for? There is a theory that Jesus spoke in parables to mask his teaching from his enemies.

One of his big challenges was that right from early on in his ministry he had enemies who wanted to get rid of him. But he had disciples to train and he wanted to reach out to people with God's healing and forgiveness to show how much he loved them. He needed time. There was always a balance between introducing the Kingdom and being killed too soon (Matt 12:14). The parables taught people about the kingdom of God. God would enlighten the people who were God centred and who wanted to know more about Jesus, while those who were antagonistic to the thought of him being the Messiah, would simply hear the nice little stories. In all probability most people would remember these puzzling little stories and only really understand what they were about after Jesus death, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then it would all make sense. God is ready to reveal himself to anyone whose heart is open to learning from Jesus.

This is the parable that Jesus explained most carefully to his disciples and probably it was the parable that they needed most in their later ministry. It is about how people come into faith in Jesus and become strong Christians, and the reasons why some people don't. Jesus himself was the Sower. He was the one with the Good News to bring. He himself **was** the Good News of the Kingdom. Later the Apostles would go out to 'Sow the seed' and preach the Gospel around the world. Later still it would be down to us! But it is always Jesus that we preach. And it is always the Holy Spirit that is at work bringing people to know Him and commit their lives to him. Jesus, the evangelist, the Sower, was going around Galilee working with a mixed collection of people. What they needed most was to know God for themselves. Through his healing and teaching ministry Jesus was making God's love known to them.

The different soils are the different responses that people might make when they hear the gospel. The seed that falls on the path is eaten by birds. These people are snatched away almost immediately by the evil one. Some people have closed their minds to God and sneer at anything to do with Jesus. They blank out completely any offer of new life in the Gospel. The love of God and salvation through Jesus is a message that is like water off a duck's back. There are probably as many reasons for this as there are people. It is always sad to find such hard hearts and sometimes we find them in quite surprising places.

The seed falling onto stony ground and among weeds is seed that starts to grow. The Holy Spirit wakens up the person to God. These people are attracted to the Gospel.

Where there are stones it is hard to grow proper roots and there would not be sufficient water or nutrients. The growth would be slow and stunted and then in a dry season the plant would shrivel and die altogether. Under the pressure of persecution or pain the person who is like the rocky soil would give up on God. Following God would cost too much. In times of persecution people need really good roots if they are to stay faithful. But here is a challenge: often we find that it is in parts of the world where Christians are persecuted that Churches grow. What makes the difference is the development of faith. It is about putting our trust totally in what God can do when we face tough situations. Faith grows as we exercise it. The more we risk, the more God shows up. If we fail to exercise our faith we will never see what God can do.

There are weeds almost everywhere but sometimes they are overwhelming. Jesus mentioned ‘the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth’ v22.

Remember, these are seeds that have germinated and started to grow. They are people who have started out on the Christian path but got distracted. There are temptations of every kind all around us. There is the temptation of covetousness and desiring a newer bigger house, car or kitchen. There is the desire for sexual gratification through pornography which is so easily accessible nowadays or illicit sex. There are lots more.

You will know if there are weeds in your life. Pull them out! Ask for prayer! Get help. They are in the way of your walk with Jesus. There are also worries and stresses of modern living. Are you getting overwhelmed by life? Get prayer! Ask me or someone else to pray with you. If it matters to you, it matters to God, and these are things which can block our life and prevent us from being fully what God intends us to be. These worries and temptations could kill our life in Christ.

But finally, the seed fell into good soil and there was a really good crop. Sometimes as much as 100x the seed that was sown. Praise God because it is all his doing. In the same way that seed mysteriously germinates and starts to grow and multiply, the Holy Spirit ‘blows where he wills’ and touches people. We are called to be catalysts for the work of the Holy Spirit. We are called to be assistant sowers and there are important things we need to think about:

1. We don’t know just from looking at someone what kind of soil they are. They may receive the Gospel with joy or they may reject it.

Everybody should hear the good news so they can decide for themselves. Do we ever make judgements about people being likely converts or not? This parable suggests we should cast our seed far and wide. We should take the gospel to whoever!

2. What about ourselves? Are we growing well? Are we allowing our roots to go down deep into the soil? The stronger the roots, the better the growth when times are hard. Roots grow best through prayer, through exercising our faith, through immersing ourselves in God's word and through meeting with other Christians. What are we doing to make sure our roots are growing well?

3. Can we pull out the weeds in our lives? It takes effort and prayer to get them out. What is distracting us and taking our eyes off Jesus?

4. The person who sows a crop is always thinking about the harvest. We may not be the person to see the harvest but we can sow the seed and we can pray for a good harvest. Jesus said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.' And then he sent out his disciples!

Emmanuel Text 2021

**WE HAVE
this HOPE
as an anchor
for the
SOUL
firm and secure.**

Hebrews 6:19

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Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Is there a point at which someone has so closed their mind to God that they cannot be saved?

2. How can we look after our roots and grow strongly in our faith?

3. What are the weeds that challenge us? Do we need help to get rid of them?

4. How can we be even more fruitful in the future?

5. Who might you take to Alpha? How can we pray for Alpha?

6.

Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?





Looking Inwards (15 mins)

Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)

Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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