

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
12/07/2020
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Genesis 25: 19-34	Rebekah has twins
Psalms 119: 105-112	Lord I will keep your word and law
Romans 8: 1-11	Sin gives death, but the Spirit in you gives life
Matthew 13: 1-9 18-23	Jesus tells the parable of the 4 Soils

Introduction

In today's gospel reading Jesus tells the Parable of the Four Soils. In our reflection I would like to look at the three parts of the parable, that is the sower, the seed and the four different types of soil, and how this parable might relate to our lives here and now.

Parable Overview

Lets firstly have a look at an overview of the parable. Jesus used parables in much of his teaching. Parables are stories of events from everyday life, that people would have known about, that are used to expound religious or moral truth. This year as we go through Matthew's Gospel we will be hearing lots of parables where Jesus usually starts by saying, "The Kingdom of heaven is like ..."

Today's parable is a bit different in that Jesus usually doesn't follow up with an explanation, but this time he does with his closest disciples.

In this parable we have the sower representing God, who is sharing the Good News with everyone. We have the seed, which represents the Good News of God we have in Jesus, and we have the 4 different soils which represent our lives and how we respond to Jesus. Let us now look at each of these aspects of the parable.

The Sower

Firstly the Sower. The sower represents God, wanting to share the Good News of Jesus with the world. Just as the sower throws out the seed liberally to all parts of the surrounding ground, so the Good News of Jesus goes out into all the world. We see how the sower is not so concerned about whether or not the seed grows, but more that it goes out everywhere, with every opportunity to thrive.

The Seed

The seed is the Good News of Jesus, and there are a number of verses from our reading today that highlight this:-

From Psalm 119 we have –

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lantern to my feet: and a light to my path.

From Romans 8 we have –

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

And we have Jesus himself saying -

⁹ Let anyone with ears listen!

The seed in the parable is not just something to take or leave as we see fit. This seed, which Jesus describes as “the word of the Kingdom” is the way to God. It is how our broken relationship with God is restored, and how we are enabled to live knowing that we are secure in God’s love.

The Soils

So let us now look at the four soils – the path, the rocky soil, the thorny soil and the good soil, and what Jesus has to say about them. There are three negative types of soil and one positive. Jesus seems to deliver this as a matter of fact. It may be that he is preparing his disciples for the rejection that he knows they will face at some stage in the future. Then there is the final positive soil which produces such phenomenal results that what happens in the first three soils is overcome. The soils represent who we are and how Jesus is received and acted upon in our lives.

This is how Jesus describes the soil of the path:-

¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.

This soil represents those who show no interest in Jesus. Their hearts are hardened to Jesus and they cannot even consider accepting that Jesus is the way to living as we are meant to. I’m assuming that if you are reading or listen to this then that probably isn’t you, and you are at least open to hearing and considering what it is to accept Jesus.

This is how Jesus describes the rocky soil:-

²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.

This soil represents those who have accepted Jesus, but are unable to grow sufficiently to handle the challenges. How do we overcome it if our lives are like the rocky soil? We start by growing better roots. It sounds so simple, but to grow we need to read our bibles regularly so that we can learn more of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and we

need share with other Christians in worship and fellowship, so we can be strengthened and encouraged.

If you feel like you are the rocky soil I encourage you to hold onto Jesus and to seek help and guidance from other Christians and the Bible.

This is how Jesus describes the thorny soil:-

²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.

This soil represents those who accept Jesus, but are so concerned with other things in life, that they are unable to grow sufficiently to be productive. I believe this challenge can be overcome by developing our prayer life. In this individualistic, materialistic world that we live in it is easy to fall into the trap of taking on the world's values. If our relationship with God is undergirded with a deep prayer life then our ability to grow will be increased. We need to plan time into our lives to intentionally spend time with God.

And this is how Jesus describes the good soil:-

²³ But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

What a wonderful image the good soil gives us. With our current next to zero interest rates at the moment, even the smallest increase of thirtyfold seems incredible. If we hear and understand the good news of Jesus then fruit will flow from this.

If we are like the good soil, then we also take on the traits of the sower, allowing more seed to be sown.

Conclusion

The parable of the four soils gives us both a warning, and a wonderful illustration of what it is to truly accept and follow Jesus in our lives.

We are challenged to be like the good soil, and not be hard hearted, shallow or contaminated in our lives, but we are also reminded of the wonderful blessing that it is to know and follow Jesus.

As Jesus said to his disciples,

¹⁷ Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

We are people who have heard the Good News of Jesus. Let us live our lives with the joy that Jesus gives us and be fruitful. Amen.