

## Seeds, Soil, and the Kingdom of God

15<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time-Matthew 13: 1-23

When we think of Jesus sitting down by the side of the lake this week, probably to find a bit of peace and quiet, we realize that His solitude is momentary. He is immediately surrounded by a mass of people. **“Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down and the whole crowd stood along the shore.”** This would have been Jesus’ life. Just as we seek meaning to our lives, the people of Jesus’ time were also searching for answers to their deepest and most difficult questions. And with this driving passion to know and understand the basic fundamentals of life, they sought a teacher who might answer their deepest longing. There was probably little peace and tranquility for Jesus as the crowds grew and demanded more from Him.

The scene is very vivid. Jesus has to escape the crush of the crowds to be able to respond to their pressing questions about life and God. They would have been like you and me, asking the hard questions of the Savior...Why do people suffer? What is the meaning of life? Why has my wife or husband left me? What can I do to help my children? Why are some so rich, while others toil in poverty?

And so, Jesus crawls into a boat so that the water will amplify His words. But instead of teaching them in simple language, Jesus uses parable to explain His message. This frustrates and confuses His disciples as to why he would use this form of communication. Scripture scholars will say that in part, Jesus uses parable, a story set in the context of daily life, to capture the attention of those who are present. And yet, a parable will also demand a time of reflection, prayer and discernment so that the fullness of the story’s power and meaning can “take root” deeply within those listening.

To be a follower of Christ is not easy. Jesus’ examples of seeds that fall onto different types of ground is referring to the barriers that we all face in the midst of our struggle to believe in a loving and merciful God. Many things get in our way, especially when life is not fair or just for all.

Jesus’ final words this week explain the parable of the sower as it pertains to all of us who seek the truth and life of the living God. Jesus warns us to beware of a shallow embrace of the gospel. Our failure to understand the meaning will thwart the path to God. So too will a superficial or artificial embrace of the gospel. Great enthusiasm might be our initial expression but if we never spend time in reflection, prayer and discernment of God’s Word, our faith will fall away. The final warning from Jesus is that the desire for the riches of the world will be a hindrance to the joy of belief. Jesus says that we must be the rich soil in which the word takes root. Then we will be **“the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.”**

Blessings!

  
Sue Schettler