

The Sower and the Seeds

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[0 : 0 0] There's always a danger when we hear stories that we've heard so many times before, because we can kind of shut down. If we've heard a Bible story, a parable, so many times we can become so familiarized with it that we lose that kind of cutting edge that that story would have had with the people who heard it for the very first time.

When we read the Gospels, we don't know the exact detail of what was taking place, but it's reckoned that there's every chance, every possibility, that when Jesus was telling this parable, he would have been outside, there's every possibility that he may well have actually been pointing to the sowing of seeds taking place.

And the way in which they would do that was they would take a sack of seeds and they would put it on the back of a donkey, and they would take a blade and they would slash a couple of holes in the sacks containing the seeds, and the donkey would be led along.

And as the donkey would walk along, so the seeds would fall out of the sack. And you can imagine this going on, and Jesus pointing to it, and everybody watching this donkey walking along with this trail of seeds going behind.

And inevitably, as the donkey would walk along, so that seed would be landing on different types of surface. And each of those types of surface actually has something to say to us, and that's why Jesus gave us this parable.

[1 : 3 9] Soil, we've got some soil in some trays here. And the thing about soil is that all sorts of things can grow out of soil, can grow in soil.

You can grow good things, things that are healthy, things that are good to eat, things that taste good, things that will be good for you. But other things can grow out of soil as well, things that are damaging, things that can cause harm, indeed poisonous things, things that could kill you, can grow out of that soil.

And so in just talking about the soil itself, it gives us something really important to think about. Namely, that God wants us to grow, but there's always the potential for good, as well as not so good.

But at the outset, as Jesus starts telling this story, he's saying that God wants the good for us. He wants us to truly flourish. Clyde.

So we come to the seed. And when Jesus talks about the seed, I thought, how can something so small and insignificant, for those who are gardeners here, I'm not a great gardener.

[2 : 5 4] I just put things in and water it, and just as surprised that it actually grows, I'm really pleased that it grows. But we don't know what the potential of that is.

But God does. And so in this story that he's telling us is the fact that the seed can get sown, but the potential of what could happen for it.

Now, I was just thinking, for many of us, what that has looked like in our lives, how that has flourished. And maybe as we think about the seed of ourselves, of the blessing that that has been, maybe people that have nourished us, people that have come alongside us.

And later, when we do a sort of form of response in a minute, we think about that. But my passion is for other people that we're alongside. He's talking about the word of God.

The word of God has been planted, it's been sown. But what do we do to nourish that? Sometimes with my seed, I will put it in. And if you know me, I've got the patience of a gnat.

[4 : 0 8] You know? What is it my wife laughs straight away? Thank you. She knows me so well. It's, you know, I want it to happen instantaneously.

Now, sometimes I can sit there and it's not going to grow. And I've got to wait. I've got to wait to see it flourish. And it may well be with our friends, maybe with our friends, with our family, that the seed

has been sown and that we have to wait.

Maybe I feel for me the seed is God's prompting of when to step in and when to water it. Maybe as we think of the seed, when do we step in for our friends, for our work colleagues, for people that we know?

When is God's prompting in our lives to do that? So as Jesus gives us this picture of the donkey walking along, the seed falling out, one of the surfaces that he says the seed fell on was a path. It's the closest I could get to a pathway, but we've got some stone there. And you've got this picture, the donkey's walking along, the seed's pouring out the back of the sacks that it's holding.

[5 : 26] And as it walks across that surface, so the seed, they come along, but of course they land on the path. And so nothing much is going to happen.

They're just going to sit there until, well, birds come along. Now, I was getting a little bit desperate for props. I got back from holiday last night, so bear with me, okay?

You're going to have to use your imagination, because as Jesus was telling this parable, this might not be quite what he had in mind, but the imagination is a fine thing.

So the birds came along. And as birds do, they gobbled up the seeds.

Now, the thing is, is that the seed was there, and it's got the potential, but it wasn't able to go anywhere.

[6 : 29] And it makes us think about how we can be distracted too easily. You know, we've all got those same questions about life, and they're human questions that every single one of us as a human being has.

And yet, those questions don't go away, but we can be distracted from staying close to those questions. We have that sense of the spiritual about us, that sense of hunger, that thirst for God. And yet, the busyness of life takes over. And just a seed on a path can't even begin to take root. So, that which is deeply spiritual in us can easily just become ignored as we become distracted by all the everyday stuff that takes life over.

I thought you were going to do an Orville impression. The next one is that Jesus talks about the stony ground.

And if like me, oh, we've got some stones, that's a bit like an Easter garden, right? Sort of stones in the rocky ground of life. And Jesus talked then to people who knew that about what it's like when a seed falls into ground, and suddenly it sort of flourishes, but all of a sudden it's not going to last in that ground.

[8 : 00] And you and I know people, maybe we've been there ourselves. I certainly was. Where, you know, I've flourished as a teenager around church, and then decided that maybe I didn't need that rooting.

And we all know so often, without that rooting, how quickly, it's like the parable last week of the man on the rock and the man on the sand. All it needs is a short storm, whatever that storm looks like, and there's no rooting there.

And it's not going to last. And as Jesus was talking to people, I thought, what do I do? What do I do alongside people who I see, who have flourished and had this amazing thing in their life, but then something comes and they get not?

What am I called to do as a Christian? And it's all about the soil. Because if anything like me, I'd like to transplant things in my garden.

You know, if it's not growing in one place, I know very carefully that it will grow in a better place, because I haven't read the instructions. It needs to go into a sunnier, deeper, different type of soil.

[9 : 17] And maybe as I was thinking about Jesus' words, and Jesus was asking and sending out his disciples, what do I do for my friends, for my family, when I see the rocky soil taking over?

What am I called to do? And maybe that's about directing and helping, standing alongside and rerouting into a different place.

And then Jesus talks about how some seed lands in soil, so the seeds start to grow, but it's not the only stuff that's growing in that place, because he talks about thorns and weeds, and how the good stuff starts to grow and begins to take root, but because of this other stuff growing around it, it begins to choke that growth, and it stops it becoming its full potential.

And as Jesus talks about that, so he refers to the worries of this world and the desires of wealth, the sorts of stuff that can actually choke that growth.

God wants every single one of us to grow. God also warns us that there are so many things that can easily choke that growth.