



What Kind of Soil Are You? Luke 8:1-15 14/06/26 with Morgan

What is a Parable?

When Jesus taught people he used lots of stories and word pictures to make his point. You might remember that he did it when Jesus went to the house of Simon, and a woman came in and started crying and pouring perfume on Jesus' feet. Simon got very angry. So, Jesus tells Simon a story about two men who owed

different sums money to someone. And because the two men didn't have the money, he told them not to worry about paying him back. It was a story about how God forgives. He asked which one would love the one who forgave them the most; the one who owed little or the one who owed a lot? Some people say that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That means it's a story about things that normally happen on earth, but they teach us something about ourselves, God and sometimes and how we need to respond to him. Today, we are going to be looking at 'The Parable of the Sower'. Most of our Bibles call it that but I think this parable could also be called 'The Parable of the Soils' because that seems to be the most important thing in this story.

The Parable Jesus was an amazing man! He spent his life travelling from place to place, telling everyone about God's love for them. Christians call this evangelism and it's part of what we do here at Ebenezer. We believe it's a very important part of our life as a church family. If you have a Bible with you, you can see that's what Jesus is still doing in Luke 8:1. It says: Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. It really is good news that God loves us. The Bible tells us that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to die on a cross for us. All of us have done things that are wrong. and when we do something wrong normally there's a punishment. But when Jesus came into this world he came, not only to tell us how much God loves us, but also by showing it when he died on a cross, because in dying on a cross Jesus was punished instead of us for all the bad things we have thought, said, and done so, we can be friends with God again!

Now, Jesus by this point was really, really popular. Lots of people wanted to be around him because he was able to do some pretty amazing things. In junior church we've been thinking about the seven signs that showed that Jesus was and still is God's Son. So, it's no surprise to us in verse 4, while a large crowd was gathering from town after town and he told them this parable.

It begins with a Sower. Now, the Sower is actually a farmer, not someone who sews clothes just in case we're confused. And he goes out one day to plant some seeds, that's what sowing means. It's a very normal picture. Some people think that Jesus might even have used it because a farmer might have just walked past. When we plant seeds we hope that something will grow, maybe a big strong tree, maybe some veggies we can eat, maybe a pretty flower we can look at and enjoy. The farmer goes into his fields with the seed. But he isn't very careful with his sowing. He just starts throwing the seed around not really worrying too much about where it's landing. The seed in this story lands on four different types of soil. (Luke 8:5-8). The first lot of seeds fall on the path. (v 5). What do we think? In Jesus' story the birds swoop down and eat the seeds straight away; so, nothing grows. The ground is far too hard. In verse 6, some seed fall on rocky ground. This isn't ground with lots of stones and pebbles in it. It's a thin layer of soil sitting on top of something called the bedrock, so, plants can grow, but very sadly they don't last long. The roots could only go down as far as the rock, so, when the sun shines down on the plants, they don't survive. In verse 7, some other seed fall among thorns and weeds that compete with the plants for the soil, for the water, and sunlight. they are normally stronger, and win. So, the plants grow but they get choked. But there is a fourth type of soil in this story, in verse 8. Jesus calls this soil, good soil. The seed has found good soil that has just the right amount of water so the plants can enjoy the sunshine without getting thirsty. So, there we have Jesus' story. Over the summer holidays if you help out with any gardening you now know Jesus' top tips for planting seeds and gardening! But remember what we said. A parable isn't just a nice story, it has a special meaning" that teaches us something about God and how we should respond to him.

The meaning One group of people who were confused about Jesus' lesson was the disciples. (v9) who asked him what the parable means. Jesus tells us that the seed is the word of God. (v11) The 'word of God' is another phrase for the good news. The Sower, or the farmer, is Jesus but it is also anyone who tells others about God's love for them in Jesus. So, this story is about someone who is telling people about God's love for them. Maybe they're his friends and family. Maybe its anyone he meets and has a conversation with! Yesterday I had that chance to do that. A stranger asked me out of the blue: What gives you happiness? I was able to answer 'Jesus!'

Jesus explains what the different soils mean. We need to listen to this bit very carefully because the soils are different people, and that means we are one of them! Jesus' story is about what people do when they hear the good news.

Remember how the bird came down and took the seed away? Jesus is saying that some people hear the good news about God's love and it doesn't have any effect on them at all. Their heart is hard and the good news is taken away straight away. We hear the word of God in many ways: in a family service like this, in Messy Church like we will later on today, maybe in Theos or Junior church, maybe Jucos or Covies, and coffee morning. These are all different places where we hear the voice of God. Maybe you are here today and you're hearing about Jesus, but you're going to leave church forgetting what you've heard; the seed has just been taken away. The Bible warns us in Hebrews 3:7-8, Today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts.

There was a second type of soil. (v 13), Jesus reminds us, the seed fell on rocky ground. Remember the thin soil with rock underneath it. Jesus tells us that these people start well. They hear the voice of God, and they believe the good news about God's love to them in Jesus, but very sadly they don't last because things get hard and they give up. I've quit many things in my life, Judo, music, all because I found them too hard. And that's why many people stop following Jesus! Maybe friends in school started making fun of them, and they decide life would be easier if I weren't a Christian. Maybe they get sick or something else bad happens and they think, 'if Jesus loved me this wouldn't have happened', and so they give up. Maybe you are here this morning and you've been following Jesus, but you're getting a bit shaky because life is getting harder. We have to remember that Jesus never promised that being a Christian would be easy in this life. In fact, life might be even harder for a Christian. But if we keep going, trusting and looking to him for help everyday he will help us through, and one day we will get to heaven and everything difficult that we lived through on earth will be worth it.

The third soil was very thorny. (v14). Jesus tells us that they also hear the voice of God, and they believe it, but they don't last either. And it's not because life gets hard. It's because other things become more important than Jesus. These weeds compete with the plants and normally win. Is there anything in your life or heart that is competing with Jesus? Why not talk to the person next to you about this? Maybe popularity with friends and so we hide our faith until it dies out? Maybe our hobbies? Maybe family? Maybe our jobs? Money? Exam results? Pursuing our dream? I know of one person who gave up simply because they didn't want to give up their Sunday mornings. There are lots of things that might compete with Jesus in our lives. And they might be good things, but even if they are good things they will all disappoint us in the end. Only Jesus can truly satisfy us and make us happy forever. So don't let anything take Jesus' spot in your heart.

Then there's the fourth soil, (v15). This is the person who hears the word, whose hearts are soft, like the good soil, and there are no rivals to Jesus in their life. How do people with this sort of heart respond to the word? They begin by trusting in Jesus and what he has done for on the cross. That's all the Bible tells us we need to do if we want to be saved: trust in Jesus! They repent of their sins. The word repent means to turn around. We live our way and then we make a choice to turn around and live God's way, living the rest of our lives knowing and loving Jesus more and more day by day and telling others about him. Is that you? I hope it is! Did you know that this can be you! When we hear the word of God the only right way to respond is to believe and to continue to trust him through everything we go through in life.

Conclusion What kind of soil are you? We can't change our own hearts. And we can't change other people's hearts either. That's why we should pray before telling others about Jesus. God through his Holy Spirit does change people's hearts. He's a master Sower or Gardener. He breaks through the hard ground when our hearts are hard, he hacks up all the stones, he pulls up all the thorns and makes our hearts ready to receive his word and believe in him.

Let's ask God to give us hearts that are like the good soil: listen to his word, love Jesus, and keep following him all the days our lives, telling others about him, so they too might trust in him. AMEN