

# THE PARABLE OF THE



## EXTRAVAGANT AND GENEROUS SOWER

Matthew 13: 1-13

*And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow." Matt 13:3*

Sitting in a boat one day, Jesus looks out at the crowd gathered on the beach and tells them a parable: A sower goes out to sow. As he sows, some seeds fall on the path, and birds come and eat them up. Other seeds fall on rocky ground, where they spring up quickly, but wither when the sun burns their shallow roots. Other seeds fall among thorns and are choked. Still other seeds fall on good soil and bring forth abundant grain.

If you are anything like me I suspect you have heard and read this parable many times. You may have even thought - what sort of Christian am I? Am I path hardened? Am I rocky?, Am I thorny? Am I good soil? May be it has left you feeling low about your own faith life, perhaps feeling judged or somehow inadequate or even anxious or even feeling bad about your Christian self?

My advice is to stop thinking this parable is about the four different terrains upon which the seed falls. This is not what the parable is about. This parable is all about the nature and character of God. That is why it is called 'The Parable of the Sower.' It shows the extent of God's provision and shines a light upon God's extravagant generosity when it comes to us, his creations.

Consider again the actions of the sower. The sower goes out to sow, and as he sows, the seed falls everywhere. Imagine the sower blissfully walking

across fields, hills and dales, through towns and cities, through gardens and back yards, through playgrounds and parking areas scattering fistfuls of seed everywhere. The sower casts the seed here and there and does not heed where the seed actually lands. Why? Because there is enough seed to go around. The sower keeps flinging the seed everywhere because he knows there is enough seed for everyone and if some is wasted, then so be it. The sower cannot help but be generous.

The sower is God and God's word is enough to cope with any sort of ground, no matter wherever it lands. I trust in God's endless ability to soften hard ground, clear away rocks, and cut through the most stubborn of thorns to make way for a harvest.

We often worry about the success of our church, and we can often dwell upon our failures. How I wish our church was known for its absurd generosity. How I wish we were famous for being like the Sower, going out in joy, scattering seed before and behind us in the widest arc our arms can make. I want the world to laugh at our lavishness instead of recoiling from our stinginess. I want people to see in us a generous, gentle confidence instead of looking hard, rocky or thorny or finding us abrasive, judgmental, even insular. We need to be casting seeds of love, mercy, justice, humility, honour and truthfulness from our hands and fingers in such appalling quantities that even the birds, the rocks,

the thorns, and the shallow, sun-scorched corners of the world would burst into colourful, riotous life.

In a world overshadowed by sickness, scarcity, warfare, suffering and loss, what does the world need more than a sower who is lavish? A sower who errs on the side of wastefulness? A sower who'd rather lose a bunch of seeds to inhospitable terrain than withhold a single one.

The thing about this parable is that at some deep, intuitive level, we recognise its wisdom. Somehow we know that Jesus is telling the truth. We've seen how new life can spring from the most shrivelled places - places we've given up on, places we've assumed are hardened beyond hope. We've witnessed inhospitable environments being altered by love. We know that joy follows from selflessness and generosity, not from caution and miserliness.

Look at God the sower again. Look at him, tossing the seeds to the wind with a delighted smile on his face, inviting all of us to release our own handfuls and revel in his joy. He's too busy laughing to count seeds. Are we?

*Bibliography.*

*Into the Mess and other Jesus stories - Debie Thomas.*

