

Matthew 13:1-23  
Feilding Baptist  
18/7/21

[Call to Worship](#)

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the one  
    who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
    or sit in the company of mockers,  
2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
    and who meditates on his law day and night.  
3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
    which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither -  
    whatever they do prospers.  
4 Not so the wicked!  
    They are like chaff  
    that the wind blows away.  
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
    nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

[Children's Talk - A tale of Two Kings - Gloria Furman](#)

[Message - Are your feet wet?](#)

Jesus calls us to make a decision, to be His follower, or not.

Teachers love to catch a teaching moment. These are unexpected opportunities for learning, unscripted, and unplanned for. No lesson plan required, you grab the moment. Well, here was one.

You often hear the phrase about taking time to smell the roses. Have you heard that one?

In Waitara an open air art space had been created off the main street. I took my class for a look, and took the long way back to school through the rose garden. I don't exactly remember how it went, but probably I said, that one has a good scent. And I realised with the blank looks that I got, that these kids had no idea that roses had fragrance.

A look of sheer astonishment came from one young face when they sniffed the rose. What a delight! An unplanned, unexpected teaching moment. And one that I'll remember for a long time.

So to the parable of the sower. You might think that Jesus is walking through a grain field. He notes the dusty path, kicks a rock, points out the weeds. And the story is created. But no!

Jesus had gone to the lake. Did He go for a rest? Did He go alone? We don't know. Soon enough crowds of people came. And Jesus sees an opportunity. He sees a boat, and uses it as a stage, just out in the water, with the people on the land. And as He looked at them, He realises what great time to tell a story about winds, and waves, and fishing. No!

Jesus recognises something.

Matthew has set up this scene with what came before. Last week we looked at a passage where Jesus talked about His new family. Jesus' followers are his mother, brothers, sisters. But what stuck in my mind from those verses was that Jesus real family, blood family, was outside. On their own. Jesus was inside with the crowd and the disciples. This was Jesus' new family, the inside family. This inside and outside thing is significant. Hugely important. Us and them (France, 501). It is this that leads into this parable.

Jesus is in a boat. The disciples are in the boat. The people are on the shore. The water, the space between them creates the teaching moment.

Matthew 13:1-9 (NIV- UK)

[The parable of the sower](#)

*1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop - a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.'*

Four soils, six outcomes for seed sown. And it's not too hard to imagine. Easier if you've ever sown grass, or lupins as a veg garden green crop. This isn't about one beetroot seed every ten centimetres. This is about broadcasting seed. Usually done by hand, though you could have a sack on an animal with some holes in it (Bkgd Com, 82). As you do with grass seed, you lightly rake it after you've sown it, trying to not bury it too deep. Back in Jesus time they'd plough second. It's not like ploughing we do, turning soil over, this was more grubbing, two to eight centimetres (one to three inches) only (Wilkins, 475).

If you've sown grass seed in the likes of Mid Canterbury, you'll know about rocks. If you've been watching the news lately, you'll know about rocks. See how the river went over the back and covered the farmland with gravel, or shingle. It washes down out of the alps. It covers the pasture. If you dig into the pasture, in upper Mid Canterbury, you'll be digging in gravel. Before stop banks the rivers went wherever they wanted.

If you drive around upper Mid Canterbury you'll see piles of stones in paddocks where the farmer's children have been put to work in the school holiday. "Get out there and collect the rocks." "I'll give you a cent for ever ten." Fortunately there are rock collecting machines now. The noisiest things I've ever heard. These machines are only good for wide open spaces. When the nursery I worked for put down a new lawn, the staff were taken to the property, one bucket each, in a line, picking up stones. I'm sure the neighbours thought we were a prison gang. It felt like it.

You sow the lawn, with a fiddle, or by hand, and even if you're very careful, some will go over the edge, on the concrete paths. As did in the story. And the birds pour in like sea gulls to fish and chips on the beach. And weeds, yep, they'll grow, but one good spray now puts paid to them.

Six outcomes, three that do well, and three that do no good. A harvest to this extent around Galilee would have been most welcome. Over in the Jordan Valley in the rich soil you could get this yield. In rocky ground you could only expect 10x. Sixty would be amazing, and 100x is beyond your wildest dreams. Three good, three not so good. It's a nice story, but what is Jesus getting at?

Perhaps it was obvious at the time?

But look what comes next. You have to wonder about these disciples. Were they not listening? I mean if I was there, I'd have asked about the root that grew, then died. I'd have asked about the fruit. The disciples, they ask, why do you teach in parables? What an unbelievably stupid question! Were they uncomfortable and trying to change the subject? It's like going to buy a car and asking how often the trains go past! Good question, but really?

Unphased, Jesus replies;

Matthew 13:10-17 (NIV - UK)

*10 The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?'*

*11 He replied, 'Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables:*

*'Though seeing, they do not see;  
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.  
14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:*

*“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.  
15 For this people’s heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.”[a]*

*16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For 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.*

Jesus goes into committee. The answer isn't for the crowd, just the disciples on the boat. And I still think Jesus would have rolled His eyes at the question.

Jesus is frustrated with the response of the people. Jesus offering life. But the people stand on the shore, going from one foot to the other. They won't step into the water.

And this is nothing new. As Jesus notes in Isaiah's time, 700 years earlier, same thing. Jesus is referring to the wonderful Isaiah chapter six that we looked at a couple of weeks before Christmas. This short chapter that looks so hopeless, until the last verse, when a shoot comes from a stump.

Isaiah 6:13

*And though a tenth remains in the land,  
it will again be laid waste.  
But as the terebinth and oak  
leave stumps when they are cut down,  
so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.'*

Jesus is the shoot. The start of something new. A new tree is emerging, from the roots of something very old, and very good. Small, but growing, and since then has grown into a massive tree.

Some see, some hear, and some understand. But the failure here is that that soil, some of the soil won't even receive the seed. As in Isaiah's time, the human heart is a hard thing to break into.

As Jesus notes in v17, you are very privileged. So many longed for this moment, longed for the shoot to come. And now Jesus is here, the disciples can see, can hear. And in time they too will understand.

Why did Jesus speak in parables? That we might remember, and understand.

So what is the parable of the sower about?

Matthew 13:18-23 New International Version - UK

*18 'Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 when anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.'*

Footnotes

Matthew 13:15 Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)

The first seed suffers from bird strike. Birds in the Old Testament were often seen as evil. So for birds to take the seed, yep, the people back then would have understood this well. So, yep, we get that. These people are not part of God's Kingdom.

The fourth scenario, these last seeds do oh so well! They are so fruitful! Perhaps we should see the 30 as the fruit from someone who begins to follow Jesus later in life, and 100 as someone who has a long time to be fruitful? These are Kingdom people.

But what about the second and thirds? It's the two in the middle that lead us to the point.

The seconds land joyfully on rocky ground. These are the Easter campers who have a profound experience of God, but three days later, the excitement is gone. These are the people who have had a remarkable answer to prayer, yet forget. They start to germinate, but that's as far as they get. Commitment is skin deep. Are they part of God's Kingdom?

What about the third group? It has been suggested that Judas fits here (Blomberg, 105, 113). The ways of the world got too much. The weeds are the things we know don't fit into the Kingdom of God, but we just can't leave them. They smother us. And we just can't live, we can't thrive, and we end up suffocating. Don't be like Judas. Don't let the worries of life, the temptations of life overwhelm you. The deceitfulness of wealth. Is this group part of the Kingdom of God?

Here we have four soils. But only one soil type brings forth fruit. The other three don't. So we really have two groups here. True followers of Jesus, and those who aren't. Some of them might be fans of Jesus, but they are doing things their way. They are not true followers.

Where are the true followers? Well, they're in the boat.

What about those on the shore?

Will they step into the water?

We also are left with a decision. Will we get our feet wet? Because here there is black and white, light and dark, right and wrong. There is no in-between. We're either with Jesus or not.

### [Benediction](#)

Micah 6:8

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

In the name of Jesus. Amen.