



Matthew 13:1-23

1 Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, **2** but such crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the beach, **3** and he told them many things in parables.

4 He said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. **5** Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; **6** but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. **7** Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. **8** Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. **9** Listen, anyone who has ears!'

Other readings: Isaiah 55:10-11 Psalm 64 (65) Romans 8:18-23

One of the interesting features of the Gospel according to Matthew is that it contains five extensive discourses of Jesus, the first of which is the Sermon on the Mount. The evangelist, it seems, has compiled these speeches to indicate that Jesus is a teacher greater than Moses. As Moses inspired the five books of the Pentateuch, Jesus leaves us in five speeches the new law of the gospel.

The central discourse in chapter 13 is a collection of the parables of Jesus. Our reading this Sunday extends for twenty-three verses. Only the opening parable of the Sower is given above. It is appropriate that this is the first parable, for it is all about hearing, about really listening, about responding and about bearing fruit.

Later in the chapter Jesus will explain that the seed represents the 'word of the kingdom', and that it falls into different situations and suffers various fates. The obvious question is what kind of reception are we providing for God's word. The challenge is to produce a hundredfold, which in agricultural terms would be a fantastic, indeed impossible, yield. The prophet Second Isaiah teaches us that the word from God carries out the will of God and succeeds in what it was sent to do. With the grace of Christ we can yield a harvest. St Paul speaks to us once again from the Letter to the Romans about the process of giving birth which he observes in the whole of creation. Our lives may be marked by suffering and struggle, but we know from the life of Christ that this is the way to true life. It is by his grace that we reach 'the freedom and glory' of the children of God.

How do I react to 'the word of the kingdom'?

Am I able to see my sufferings as part of a process of being born to new life?

We pray for all those who sow the seed of the word, that they may do so with wisdom and love.

We pray for those who resist the attraction of the gospel.