



## A So-So Sower – Touchpoint for July 12, 2023

**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup> That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup> Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup> Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

<sup>18</sup> “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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.”

**Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.**

*“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”*

The parable of the sower is a fairly familiar one. A sower goes out to sow. And he seems to be a rather indiscriminate sower. He doesn't seem all that careful about where his seed goes as it falls on all kinds of soil.

It falls on hardened paths where there is no chance of growth. It falls on rocky soil where there is very little good soil, so there is a minimal chance of growth. It falls among soil with lots of thorns... apparently this sower hasn't done much prep work on the soil and so this seed has a slim chance as well. Finally, some of the seed falls on good soil and a great harvest is yielded.

So according to this story, at least half the seed falls on soil that has not been plowed and cannot be plowed. One would not plow a path if trying to plow rocks would only break the plow, I would suspect. Not that I have much experience with plowing.

And the other half falls on ground that has either been plowed or will be plowed, and half of that is full of thorns.

At first glance, this is one strange sower. Oh heck, at second and third glance this is one strange sower. Indiscriminate, wasteful, and sloppy. Why, his standard for what qualifies as seed-deserving soil has a rather low bar.

But here he is, sowing seed basically anywhere and everywhere.

Now while this may all seem somewhat confusing, there is an explanation later on. And it is quite a good explanation, I might add.

Oh, there might still be some confusion at first, because in the explanation sometimes the seed is the Word of God and sometimes the seed is people. So there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of consistency in the explanation, but I can overlook that... because, well, the explanation talks one way or another about people. It divides them up. Puts them in categories. Allows for easy compartmentalization of them.

And there are very few things I like more than categorizing, labeling and compartmentalizing others. It makes life a whole lot easier to get people defined, and then simply move on.

You know, there are good and bad people just like there is good and bad soil. There are people whose hearts are hardened by being trampled on in life, just like the hard path soil. There are people whose life is on the rocks, just as there is rocky soil. There are those who get all caught up in the vanity, the cares and concerns of the world, just like the soil with thorns.

And finally, there are good people. Just as there is good soil.

And if you want to know who fits into which category, just ask me. I will identify all the people I know with what kind of soil they are. It's fairly obvious, if you ask me.

And most assuredly, I can tell you what kind of soil I am. And while it may not be all that obvious to you, I can tell you with utmost assurance that I am the good soil.

And I am good soil all of the time. Well, almost all of the time.

Take my drive down to the Valley the other day. I started out as good soil. I mean that as I left my home, I was certainly receptive and open to the Word of God.

But then, that jerk driving the white BMW cut me off... you know, where I-17 goes from two lanes down to one due to construction. Well, this idiot either didn't see it or didn't care because he swerved his car right in front of me and I had to slam on the brakes to avoid running into him... and, well, let's just say I muttered something that showed I wasn't too open to God's loving and forgiving word. And my heart got more than a little hardened to this world and its inhabitants. Even though it was totally justifiable.

But other than that, I have always been good soil.

Well, to be totally honest... there were a few years when I did exceptionally well in my business. And it was kind of fun to have money and be extravagant and conspicuous in my consumption. I mean, after all, when you work hard you deserve to be able to play hard, and what's wrong with having a nice little two-seater sports car to play around with on the weekends? Right? OK, maybe I didn't pay as much attention as I should have to my relationship with God, but come on... you only live once... live a little! It's totally justifiable.

But other than that, I have always been nothing but good soil.

Well, except for that other time when my boys were teenagers and I... Oh heck, you get the picture – who am I kidding?

If I tallied up my life, I would be lucky to have the same percentages as that soil upon which the sower sows. You know, 25% good soil, 25% rocky soil, 25% caught up in the thorns of the world, and 25% just plain not giving a rat's fanny because I have become so hardened to the ways of the world.

So maybe the story isn't about what kind of soil other people are. Maybe the story is about what kind of soil *I* am at different points in my life. Heck, at different points in my day.

This parable isn't about other people. It's about me.

No... correct that. It isn't even about me.

No... this parable is about a sower who sows his Word of grace and forgiveness over all the terrain of my life. The hard-hearted times. The shallow and self-centered times. The easily excitable and flaming out times. And yes, even the good times.

This story is about a crazy sower who is going to sow his seed of grace and forgiveness even when it appears hopeless, ill advised, and wasteful.

Why it's almost as if God looks down on me and says, *"I wonder if I should keep speaking my word of grace and forgiveness over Jim..."* And then answers the question with the words in today's passage: *"Does he have ears to hear? Well then, let him hear!"*

God seems to have a pretty low bar for who God is going to speak a word to – who God is going to sow God's word upon.

God looks at us and asks, *"Do they have ears to hear? Well then let them hear."*

And apparently you don't even have to pass a hearing test.

*"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."*

This isn't a warning. It is a proclamation of tremendous grace. You and I spend our time dividing people up, categorizing them into various kinds of soil – deserving or undeserving.

God takes a slightly different approach.

*"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."*

It's kind of a low bar, don't you think?

Kind of like this meal.

I think it's safe to say there were different kinds of soils gathered around Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed. I think it's safe to say that Judas had more or less hardened his heart to Jesus. And Peter, well he is the walking definition of rocky soil. Excited one minute about who Jesus is and saying, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." And then... well, we know how that worked out for him. And the others, kinda caught up in the thorny side of life. I mean, there were some real difficult and thorny issues to deal with that night, not the least of which was their own survival.

You know, when you look at it, there wasn't much *IF ANY* good soil surrounding Jesus that night.

And yet there he was, sowing the seed of his forgiveness and grace. Planting the seed of his forgiveness and grace. In them, on them, for them.

*“Take and eat. Take and drink. This is my body and blood given for you.”*

And it wasn't just spoken to their ears so they could hear.

It was given to their hands, so they could touch. In front of their eyes, so they could see. Put in their mouths, so they could taste.

God's grace and forgiveness. Sowed on all the senses of their lives. Sowed over all the terrain of their lives.

And so it is for you, me, and all people.

**Amen.**

# *Spirit in the Desert*

## **Opening Song**

### **Be Still**

(London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

### **Spirit of the Living God**

(Celtic Spirits)

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me.

## **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

## **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

### **Come, Bring Your Burdens to God (Woza Nomthwalo Wakho)**

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

*Swahili:*

Woza nomthwalo wakho,

Woza nomthwalo wakho,

Woza nomthwalo wakho,

Uyes' akasozathi hayi.

Come, bring your burdens to God,

Come, bring your burdens to God,

Come, bring your burdens to God,

For Jesus will never say no.

## **The Meal**

### **Our Father (The Lord's Prayer)**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

## **Benediction**

### **Christ Before Me**

(Keith Duke)

Christ before me. Christ behind me.

Christ above me. Christ below me.

Christ to left and Christ to right.

Christ within both day and night.