

Reflection for Pentecost 6 by Megan Cambridge - The parable of the sower.

We are encouraged to take care of our heart; to watch our diet and to exercise – healthy living is a buzz word(s). There is another heart though, our spiritual heart. Jesus speaks often about our heart...

... For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.. (Matt 15:19)

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.. (Matt 22:37)

So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister[a] from your heart.” (Matt 18:35)

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:21)

Following Jesus begins in our heart and if our spiritual heart is ‘unwell’ it can hinder our response. In his Gospel Mark tells us that Jesus was grieved by the hardness of people’s hearts (Mark 3:5). Today’s Gospel reading, the parable of the sower, raises the whole question of the health of our hearts represented in the familiar soil types and indicative of how we relate to the word of God. We are rarely just one type of soil though. We could be all four at once, or predominantly one of these types at a certain time of life.

So at one level the parable invites us to reflect on the sort of life we are living, how we are responding to God, how healthy are our hearts. However, the parable is about more than just the question of ‘what type of soil are we?’ With that question we are put at the centre of the parable and the sower is pushed into the background. Parables, as we know, offer us a different perspective, a new worldview. They give us a glimpse into God’s world and what God is like.

In this case the parable also shows us the surprising generosity of God and asks how willing are our hearts to surrender to and be enveloped in that generosity, that grace.

Alongside the four different soils are two constants; the sower and the seed. The same seed is sown in all four soils with equal effort, hope and generosity. This is not modern farming practice focused on profit and efficiency, there is no evaluation of the quality or potential of the soil. In our parable no soil is left unsown. No soil is considered undeserving of the seeds. Thank goodness this is more about the quality of God, the sower, than the quality of the soil. We are inclined to judge our quality as soil but God simply wants to sow his life in ours.

The seed of God’s life and presence comes to us in lots of different ways. Sometimes we ask for it. Other times we don’t. Sometimes we recognize it and at other times we don’t. Sometimes we are receptive and open to it and at other times not so much.

Even those, whose hearts are overrun with ‘weeds and deeds’, are the subject of God’s love and thankfully we don't have to attain a certain standard first to receive what he wants to give us.

Come, O Creator Spirit,

Visit the souls of those who belong to you;

Fill with your grace from on high

The hearts which you have made.

Pope John Paul II (2005)