

Reflection for Pentecost 7 by Rev'd Peter Shaw

In our reading Today, we hear the parable of the Sower.

This is one of the better known of Jesus' parables and to my mind is one of the most instructive of all His parables – in that it graphically illustrates by example, how the Good News of the Gospels, God's word to all of us is accepted - or not – by His people.

We hear that as the Sower sowed, some seed fell by various places, paths, rocks, among thorns, and on good ground. Note that it “fell”; it was not thrown; it fell equally everywhere - these places are the souls of all those who hear the Good News of God's salvation for all of us, regardless of whether or not they act on these words.

So, there are four kinds of person described in this parable, and three of these did not truly act on the word of God.

Let's look a little further at what Jesus is saying here.

A path is hard and packed down. No seed can penetrate into it, and it is washed away, or it sits there - prey for the birds of the air. So the Word does not penetrate that persons' heart. The birds of the air immediately snatch away the Word, and they never really believe at all.

The birds represent Satan, who snatch away the word from a person's heart, but only because it is left, unprotected - not cherished, not acted upon. So these people had never even bothered to believe, to act on the Word of God when hearing it .

Satan cannot take away the word from your heart if you hold it close to yourself, only if you care nothing for it.

Some of the seed fell upon the rock, and when it started to grow, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

In areas where there is a thin layer of soil, as we all know, particularly the gardeners amongst us, only certain kinds of plants can grow. When there is a drought, everything dies, except for a few very hardy plants.

There is not enough soil to retain any moisture, which represents the amount of Faith that person has. There is just a small amount of faith, and not much struggle or desire to retain it probably because they are more attracted by the things of this world. So at the merest, smallest trial, such a person falls away, and they perish.

Some of the seed falls on thorny ground. The thorns spring up with the good wheat, the word of God. These thorns choke out the word of God, because we turn away from God, to our thorns, whatever they are, whether they are riches, cares of this world, our pride, ambition - our fear through not trusting God. In other words, under these circumstances, where our treasure is, so is our heart also, and their treasure is not Christ, so Christ is not with us.

Some of the seed, a small amount, falls on good ground. And it sprang up and bore fruit; our reading tells us that some sprang up thirty, some sixty and some a hundred fold, meaning that not everyone follows the word of God to the same degree.

So, how can we be good ground? Isn't that really what we should try to learn from this parable? What is good ground? Good ground, as we all know, has been tilled carefully, and dug, and the clods of soil have been broken up. It has been weeded, and fertilizer **may** have been added to it. It has been watered, and hedged round about so that animals cannot get in. It has been guarded, so no one can steal the fruits it will produce.

In short, it has been nurtured. There is effort and sacrifice involved in preparing and maintaining good ground - it doesn't just "happen".

We all know what happens to gardens if we don't look after them – they revert to what they were.

And I think that this is the lesson we can learn from this parable. The word of God and the Faith we have in receiving it are precious - beyond all comprehension. They need to be nurtured by frequent prayer, reflection on our lives as Christians, listening to the guidance that God is giving us in our lives – it all requires constant diligent work.

But we are fallible human beings and will sometimes fail to live up to the ideals of being "good ground".

But we must never lose sight of the fact that success is not as important as our efforts, genuine and heartfelt. If we make an effort, genuine and heartfelt, then in the end, paradoxically, we will be successful, because God will receive us in love, and reward us with eternal life in His Kingdom.

So in our daily lives, let us never forget that the word of God requires constant nurturing and in that nurturing comes a deeper understanding of God's love for all of us, love that we can then pass on to others by word and deed who are not fortunate enough to have heard God's word.

However, if we do not nurture the message of God's word through Faith and prayer, then it will die in our hearts.

AMEN