

## The Sower...

Our gospel reading is perhaps one of the best known within the gospels, appearing in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Today we have just the parable as it was spoken to the large crowd gathered, but if we read on in Matthew, we learn the reasons for parables and after that this parable is explained, but only to the disciples.

It is linked today to our reading from Exodus and the narrative of manna and quails from heaven. The complaining Israelites are promised that they will receive their daily bread from God, or Gods daily love for them, which is more than sufficient for their needs. The narrative of manna is clear in this, because if they gather more than they need it will perish, so don't be greedy. And on the 6<sup>th</sup> day they will be able to gather enough for 2 days, therefore no work on the sabbath. There is also a feast of quail to be had of the evening, and between the meat of an evening and bread of the morning they were fed. The profligate, overflowing love of God for his people.

In the parable, we have that same love outpoured in the metaphor of seed. It is one of the parables depicted in the East Window at St Marks, in the middle at the bottom, partly hidden by the ornate stonework of the reredoses behind the altar. There stands the farmer, chucking his seed about with gay abandon, and we also see birds, stony ground, thistles and verdant soil.

As we know well this parable gives us the clues about what is required to be a disciple; an open heart, commitment and perseverance, by which through the bearing of fruit we have evidence of our 'transformed lives'. We understand this for ourselves, as we are called to discipleship, but the parable is also an instruction for us as disciples to share in the sowing. Through our own encounter as a disciple, we understand what happens when the generous word of God was sown in our own lives, and in turn, that we need to be generous in our sowing.

At the beginning of the sowing season in my veg beds, I tried to be less than generous with the seed. In my head I was thinking about the thinning out of crops to bring it to final spacing, and as such I had large gaps in the rows, and had to re sow. If only I had been generous...

My gardening experience recognises that not every seed will bear fruit. And in life as we as disciples sow seed, we know that some is snatched away, that is just how life is how ever hard we try. Some also takes root, but never matures... we see glimpses of this through our ministry at the occasional offices of weddings and baptisms, but we continue to try and nurture that seed. There will be new believers who we must be prepare for the times of trial that will come. And that time of trial whatever it is may for some choke this new life in God out of them. A new believer needs a strong network around them that supports, encourages, and enables them to grow, and in so doing we will see fruit in abundance. It is not therefore enough to just cast the seed of Gods love about without committing to care for it, to be alert to the dangers. Gardeners understand this parable, because we know that to get the best out of what we sow, we will need to care for it as the season progresses.

I will be using this parable to speak to the year 6 children of Tower View School. Yes they will hear the parable and the generous love of God, but I also want them to understand the ground on which they stand as children about to enter secondary education is the good ground that can allow them to produce fruit. That they are like seed that has started to grow. As seed they were cast into the classrooms of Tower View. The teachers and helpers through the years have helped them to be rooted in good soil. One or two may have been like seed on the path, easily trampled, I think of those shy children. Some will have been like seeds on rocky ground with shallow soil, who started really well, showing great promise, but they wilt under a bit of pressure. The teachers will have transplanted them to the good soil and nurtured them. Some will have been growing well and then the distractions of games and social media etc threaten to choke them, and the teachers will have been weeding around those to help them be stronger than the distractions. They all come to the end of their time at Tower View rooted firmly in good soil with great potential for growth. As they move on, we will pray that their future years in education will help them to continue to grow and go on to bear much fruit.

As disciples we are called to grow and bear fruit, and also to sow and tend and nurture others, that other may know the abundant love of God that we know, for themselves in transformed lives.

Philip