

Bible reading Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

Still sowing

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE GOD'S UNENDING ACTIVITY IN OUR LIVES AND COMMUNITIES.

This week's parable reminds us that God is always sowing, always blessing and speaking to us. How can we receive God's word well and thrive under God's blessings?



Make a jar of edible soil. Crumble some brown biscuits. Fill the jar with alternate layers of chocolate mousse and biscuit crumbs – finish with biscuit layer. Add coloured sprinkles on the top; they represent growing flowers – or the good things that grow in our lives and world. Eat the creation, giving thanks for Jesus, who brings us, and is, the Word of God.

LISTEN

Spend time listening to God. Find a time-lapse video of seeds growing (e.g. on YouTube) and find a quiet and comfortable place to watch it. As it plays, think about the story Jesus told and especially about how you might hear or recognise God's word – God's voice – over all the other competing voices and noises going on around us all the time. This is a time of prayer, but not taking lists or your requests to God, rather of being open to listen.

EXPLORE

Head outside to find seeds, or parts of flowers that will become seeds. How many different ones can you find? What do seeds do? What would happen if the seeds you found fell on a path? What would happen if they fell into the soil? Can you find any examples of this happening?

Bible notes



This is Jesus' most famous parable. We know it so well – and yet maybe hardly at all. In one sense it retells Israel's history: a sorry tale of not listening, of hardened hearts, of exile and partial restoration – a familiar story to its first hearers. They would feel its pain; they longed for the kingdom of God to come. So, the punchline is somewhat baffling: 'If you have ears...' The disciples are baffled too; so, they ask Jesus what the parable means.

Behind Jesus' response are well-known Old Testament passages, especially Isaiah 55:10-13 – in which God's word stands for God coming in person. Jesus is both the one bringing the fulfilment of God's plans, and God in person, bringing the kingdom right here, right now. He is both sower and seed. Are we listening?

Jesus describes two kinds of response. The first is by those who shrug their shoulders. They either don't believe that God is interested in them or that God would send someone like Jesus to rescue them. They do not hang around. The other group is that of the disciples. They've been given the secret of the kingdom (v.11) and have stayed to find out more (v.12). Discipleship is about listening and looking, hearing what Jesus is saying, seeing what he is doing, and wanting more. Do we see it? And discipleship is about living it, leaving behind an old way of understanding the world and God, and beginning a new one in the new community gathering around Jesus, based on hearing and doing God's word.

First impressions

- Where do you find God at work in our lives in this picture?
- What does being 'good soil' mean in practice for you?
- How might you enrich your community by being 'good soil'?



A prayer of thanksgiving

God, thank you that you are always on the move – your word is never static, your wisdom not sealed and silent; you are the one who casts seed far and wide, your whispers fall around us as seeds on soil. We thank you for Jesus' teaching, which helps us to prepare ourselves to be good soil, fertile for growing the fruits of goodness and grace. **Amen.**

CREATE

You will need brown paint, paper, brushes, sand, fine gravel, very small pieces of twig, and seeds. Make the four soil types of Jesus' parable and paint them onto the paper. Add sand to the paint to make a firm path. Add fine gravel for rocky ground; tiny twigs for weedy ground; paint on its own for the good soil. Add a few seeds on top of each patch. Think of the story as you do this. Think about where you feel they are with God now (e.g. which type of soil), and where you would like to be in a few months' time. How might you achieve that?