

Once upon a time

Notes on the Bible readings

- The telling of parables was a common method of teaching. Parables are short stories to illustrate a point; sometimes – but not always – the elements in the narrative are intended as metaphors for something that helps us to understand the meaning.
- In this passage, we hear Jesus telling us the 'parable of the sower' and afterwards taking the time to explain it to the disciples (he does not always do this!). In the Gospels, Jesus often uses illustrations that would have had a particular resonance with his agricultural audience.
- We use pictures and metaphors to communicate ideas all the time. It is a powerful method of teaching. Both Old Testament writers use pictures to speak of abstract concepts (e.g. God's word). Paul uses metaphors of walking and dwelling to speak of the ways in which believers' lives are bound up with the Spirit of God. Jesus, the master storyteller, conjures up pictures to communicate deep truths about people and the work of God.
- In this parable, the sower was 'broadcasting' the seeds, indiscriminately. This is what we are called to do with the word of God as disciples of Jesus. In what ways can we share the story of Jesus with those we meet?

Where is the love?

Listen to the song 'Where is the love?' by The Black Eyed Peas. Reflect on the lyrics – how might you answer the question, 'Where is the love?'

Questions for reflection

- ▶ How often do you hear a good story?
- ▶ Why do you think Jesus told stories (parables)?
- ▶ Why are stories powerful?



A prayer of approach

*Lord, it is so good to read your Word,
and hear the parables you told.
But, Lord, we can't leave it there.
We must take note of the explanation,
and work it out in our own lives.
Help us, O Lord, to listen, to learn and to act. Amen.*

A prayer for others

Lord God, we pray today for all the people given the great privilege of spreading your Gospel.

We pray for the Church worldwide, but in particular in the places where people are still persecuted for their beliefs.

We pray for our ministers, who prayerfully seek your face, and bring us the words and understanding we need to become more faithful followers of you.

We pray for writers and poets, as they pore over your word, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring your message to life on the page.

We pray for artists and all craftspeople who draw inspiration from your word, and speak to us through their creations. Amen.

A personal prayer

*Lord God,
how can I possibly understand what you have to say to me,
if I don't take time to listen.
Help me to carve out moments this week where, even in my busyness, I can find a quiet corner,
or even just a glance heavenward, to be with you.
Speak to me, Lord, and bless me; and make me a blessing to others.
Amen.*

Live your faith

Look for an opportunity to tell your Christian story this week.