

How's your Soil?

6 Pentecost A - July 11, 2020

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

In Matthew's gospel, both Jesus and his disciples "sow the seed" of God's word by proclaiming the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near." Now, in a memorable parable, Jesus explains why this good news produces different results in those who hear.

¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And in the sowing, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹Let anyone with ears listen!

¹⁸"Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the dominion of heaven and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²³But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

- 1) A. When have you been **the hardened path** -- impervious to goodness/compassion/forgiveness or deep/profound insights to life entering into you and softening you up to something that might produce something soft/gentle/sweet again?

B. When have you been **the rocky ground** – surrounded with many apparently unmovable and hard things so that faith is really just a weekend thing.....a part of life I turn to when trouble is around or sickness visits or I'm reminded of how I "should" be living but you don't allow your faith to be tested because that's too hard/too much work or thinking or you just know "church/faith isn't supposed to be this way"...it's about what I get out of it not growing deep roots even when there are boulders in my life.

C. When have you been **the thorny ground** – trying to grow yet distracted or focused on the other pressing issues of life that need managing/quick answers/quick fixes and the latest in what self-help/exercise/organic eating or any other contemporary fad/research may provide? Trying to truly grow amongst choking and weedy ideas/perspectives can be really hard. Especially when you try and talk with those they get prickly in return. Been there?

D. When have you been **the Good Soil** – the eager, motivated, interested, willing to be truthful and vulnerable, adventurously open soul whose willingness is matched by truths and love that keeps you safe, secure and reminds you that you are enough simply as you are and yet are able to become soooo much more. Remember when?.....remember the you that was scared and eagerly anticipating all at the same time? Remember the thrill of learning, experiencing and growing into new places and understandings and experiences? Remember the joy in stretching yourself into a closer version of the vision you (and perhaps God) once had for yourself? Remember producing more, creating more, doing more, becoming more than you every thought you might be capable of?

2) In thinking about your spiritual soil.....

What do you find in the intellectual/experiential/old soil that is you? Anything you want to sift out/add in? What have you discovered about yourself in the darkest and also most fertile parts of you when you really dig down inside of your life?

What do you need/use to enrich the soil of you?

- What is compost/organic matter for you? --- more experiences?
- What is fertilizer/food for your earthy soul? – studying, reading, learning?
- What are other additives/minor essential elements you need? – service to others, a new habit to include, an emphasis for the week?
- Is it time for you to lay fallow? – to spend time in reflection and open

mediation? Are you taking time each day to simply listen for God in the silence/underneath the cacophony of life's whispered demands and screaming needs?

- Is it time for a transplant? – do you need to move geographically, relationally, or ideologically?
- How often are you getting watered in the Word, drenched in inspirational presentations, immersed in new ideas and ways of thinking, flooded deep in wonder or awestruck by God's natural majesty or power?
- Are you a fast drainer or do you hold water for the things planted in you? How quickly do you wear out/drain out or fade out and need replenishment?
- Can you recognize the weed seeds within your own thinking or how often do you truly listen to someone who reflects back their prickly experience with you or viewpoint that is different?