

The parable of the seed and the sower is fairly straightforward don't you think? Jesus gives us an explanation of what the parable is about.

The seed is good seed, although why is this farmer seed scattering quite so vigorously and lavishly?

Surely that is God's generous, expansive nature...let everyone hear, give everyone the chance.

In two places the seed fails, either immediately or within a short space of time.

In two places the seed grows successfully, but in one of them there's little or no fruitfulness. Only in the good soil does the seed take root, grow, flourish and bring a harvest.

I think there are two lessons for us today from this scripture.

The first is to acknowledge that we are complicated people...we are not one type of soil, we can be all four simultaneously.

Last week Gilly was speaking about how each of us is unique although of course we have a default personality that might be similar to someone else. We illustrated that with my favourite novel and the characters from the story

In the same way that no-one is exclusively a party animal like Toad, or a recluse like Badger, no-one is exclusively one type of soil

We can be the four soils simultaneously because we are complicated.

I can be completely deaf to something, I hear it but I don't respond. It doesn't resonate, it doesn't take root in

any way. Quite some time ago Katherine was exploring the idea of Sabbath, a day of complete rest. She read a book – the ruthless illumination of hurry. She talked to me about it. I was deaf.

But at morning prayer recently it has been a topic from the book we use and this time I'm ready to listen. How might I respond to this command to have a day of rest? What does it look like, what do I include, what do I exclude.

So, what was once a path has become good soil, I'm ready to listen and respond.

Soil number two. I can hear and respond but quickly lose heart...like the exercises our physio gives us. I come back from a session with Helen and determinedly start out, but then it all just fades away. I'm easily bored with exercises.

Number three. There are times I do hear, I do respond and I would like to have the benefit of the seed taking root but old habits die hard and worries and anxieties crowd in and negate any benefit. That is an area for personal growth.

In the parable it explains the situation this way

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

However, thorns can be cut back. Thorns can be uprooted. If like me you recognise the struggle between the word and the worries...don't give up. Take heart. Thorns can be overcome.

Then there are times I hear, I respond, I'm not distracted and the fruitfulness spoken of is evident.

Some time ago my Spiritual Director reminded me of the Ignation evening prayer exercise the Examen.

And I use a form of this every evening and it has been a life changer...this is where the fruitfulness comes in.

I spend a bit of time journaling and thinking through the day, this is the time I make my evening prayers for everyone and everything, and seek to offload the cares of the day. That last bit is where I have to keep weeding out thorns.

I've used myself as an illustration for no other reason than to back up the claim I made...we can be all four soils...but things can change, and DO change and we shouldn't despair, after all John 15:1&2 Jesus says

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.

What then is the outcome of the parable and the good seed falling into good soil and you allowing God to help you tackle those thorns so that the seed can flourish?

The word used is fruitfulness and it's perhaps been preached too often that it must be an external and visible fruitfulness, which inevitably leads to "what are you DOING" for the kingdom, where is the evidence of your fruitfulness?

How stressful.

Of course there may be some visible fruitfulness. In a church that has over 90 volunteers I could make a very long list of visible fruitfulness – the impact church

members have as Governors at this school comes to mind. (And at other schools too!)

But I think the principle fruitfulness is in our personal transformation.

As the word of God takes root our life changes. We become more aware of the thorns we want to get rid of and by His grace we do.

Those of us who stress, get anxious, worry and obsess over things find we do it less.

The fruits of the Spirit are able to flourish, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The Father is passionate about us becoming healed and whole and fulfilling our potential and it's his word taking root that leads to these things.

But soon it will be time to go home, have lunch and whatever you have planned for this afternoon? How do we respond and not let the word just bounce off.

We can respond now!

I'm going to lead a prayer. As you hear the words and want to commit – say amen at the end! Simple as that.

Let's pray.

Lord God, forgive our heart hearts and deafness. Our weak response and how we let other stuff crowd you out. Hear our prayer now and the desire that you plant your word deep in our hearts.

Grant us to hear over the coming days what you say to us and want for us. May we hear clearly and make space for your word.

We may not have been ready, we may have ignored your call, but now we want to hear what you wish to plant.

And as we respond, may we have life to the full, an increase in the fruit of your Spirit and a desire to be ever more fruitful. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 12 July 2026