



DOMINICAN
INSTITUTE
OF TORONTO

www.dominicantoronto.org

@TDominicans

A Dominican sister called Barbara Reed when speaking about parables says the first thing to note is that all parables start with the FAMILIAR. Jesus' audience knew about farming and they would have been hooked by the gospel story today about sowing seed and they would be open to finding God in ordinary life.

When Jesus spoke, he used simple words and he also used images which were taken from daily life. This is why they listened to him willingly and received his message which directly touched their heart. Why? Because it was not complicated language, as used by the Doctors of the Law at that time, it was not complicated theology. And an example of that is today's Gospel parable: the parable of the sower.

In today's parable the sower is obviously Jesus. With this image, we can see that he presents himself as one who does not impose himself, but rather offers himself. He does not attract us by conquering us, but by donating himself: he casts seeds. The focus is on the seeds not on the sower. In fact, it speaks more of the soil than of the sower. Jesus carries out, so to speak, a "*spiritual X-ray*" of our heart, which is the soil on which the seed of the Word falls.

The seed that fell on the beaten PATH represents those whose hearts are HARD. The PATH we can imagine like the (sanpietrini i.e. the cobblestones we can see everywhere in Rome) Sadly, God's call makes no impression on them. A hard heart is a closed heart, so it cannot receive. A hard heart predictably becomes a barren heart.

The seed that fell on STONY Ground represents those whose hearts are resistant. God's call is heard alright but doesn't make a deep impression. When difficulties occur, it fades away.

The seed that fell among THORNS represents those whose hearts are so full of worldly concerns that the call of God gets drowned out. It is not that God is deliberately excluded, but that there is no room for God.

And the seed that fell on Good GROUND represents those who receive God's call with open and generous hearts, and in responding to it, produce a harvest of goodness.



DOMINICAN
INSTITUTE
OF TORONTO

www.dominicantoronto.org

@TDominicans

God's word is essentially an appeal to our hearts. God longs for our hearts, and is continually calling us into communion with himself and with one another. In a *crie de Coeur* (Cry of the heart Ps 95:8) the psalmist says to God's people: "O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts'. We would do well to heed that cry. And again, in today's gospel Jesus begins by saying "LISTEN!

A sower went out to sow..." and then at the end of the gospel again Jesus says, "Let anyone with ears, Listen." It is important to note that in only one case was the word rejected outright. In other three cases it was received with joy. The problem is not in receiving God's word. The problem is in treasuring it and putting it into practice. There are, therefore, three steps involved in responding to God's word: receiving it, treasuring it, and practising it. Let us take a closer look at each of these steps.

The first step is hearing God's word. We might call it the 'mind' step. It involves listening attentively to Scripture being read and explained. The second step is treasuring God's word. It might be called the "heart" step. It involves taking to heart the word we have just heard. We consider its implications for our life and how it can make our life better. The third step is putting God's word into practice. If we call the first step the 'mind' step, and the second step the 'heart' step, we might call the third step the 'soul' step. It involves acting on what our mind has received and what our heart has treasured. The first reading of Isaiah, reminds us that "The word of God does not return to me without succeeding in what it was sent to do" And so there are three steps involved in hearing God's word: the mind step (receiving it), the heart step (treasuring it), the soul step (putting it into practice).

We are not just hearers but also sowers of the word. I remember very vividly once brother Timothy Radcliffe when he was Master of the Order, he could not personally welcome the International Justice and Peace Commission of the Order in Rome since he was away on visitation outside Italy. So he wrote a beautiful letter of welcome and then wrote "Words are all that what we have, but if we do not put these words into flesh (into action) they are not worth anything"



DOMINICAN
INSTITUTE
OF TORONTO

www.dominicantoronto.org

@TDominicans

Let's close with a prayer:

*Lord Jesus,
sower of the seed of God's word,
help us realize that just
receiving your word isn't enough.
Help us, also, take it to heart
and put it into practice.*

*Lord Jesus,
sower of the seed of God's word,
help us respond to your word,
not only with our whole mind and our whole heart,
but also with our whole soul.*

Amen.

Fr. Prakash Lohale, O.P.