

HARVESTING THE TRUTH

Mt. 13:1-9.

Today Jesus tells us the parable of the sower. It is actually a story of how people handle the truth.

The farmer was sowing seed. He reaches into a bag, takes a handful of seed, and flings them around him as he walks across the field. Today sowing with machinery is done with such precision that hardly any seed is wasted. God is not like this; when He sows He sows lavishly. Four different things happen to the seed.

Some fall on the footpath that runs beside the field. Because the ground is packed, the seeds cannot penetrate into the earth and after a while birds eat them. These are the people who respond to the truth by just closing their minds, and keeping the seed blocked out, they won't let it ever find lodging or take root inside their heart. That is a sad way to handle the truth, but it happens all the time. Every doctor can verify this fact. A woman discovers in her body one of the warning signs of cancer. but she will not go for a check up because she is afraid of what it might reveal. She would rather live in darkness and doubt than face the possible painful light of the truth. If indeed she is sick, her best chance for health lies in facing the truth as quickly as possible.

We can treat moral and spiritual truth the same way. Think for how long we have closed our eyes to the problem of racial injustice. God's truth was there all the time, telling us that we are all children of God regardless of the colour of our skin, that prejudice and discrimination were wrong. But we closed our minds and hardened our hearts, and refused to hear it. The truth can be disturbing and so sometimes we just block it out and refuse to hear it.

Let us look at the second type, shallow soil over a layer of rock. The seed sprouts and grows quickly but because there is no depth of soil it cannot endure the heat of the sun. Jesus explained this as someone who accepts the truth at first, but when some trial or

persecution comes he falls away. The truth hasn't taken root in him. We may have treated truth like this ourselves. For example, we meet opposition, challenges to our faith, and we aren't strong enough to face them. Or, we have hard decisions to make, we know what is the right thing to do and we choose the easy option. So we are like the shallow soil. The truth starts to grow, but when we feel the heat, it withers and dies.

Then, there is the thorny ground. The seed takes root, comes up, grows for a while; but finally the thorns choke it. This represents the truth that gets crowded out of our lives by the worries of the world and the lure of riches. Everyone of us knows something about this. A father and a mother know that they should spend time with their children, get to know them, love them and guide them. But their careers and outside activities come first. Then one day they look around and find their children have gone. Years go by so quickly; and once they have gone, these opportunities will never come round again.

Truth is a hardy plant. All the thorns and thistles in the world will never kill it, but they can certainly crowd it out of our lives. If we are to clear the ground and keep our lives uncluttered what we need is a spiritual hoe, namely getting our priorities correct. Then we can give the truth a chance to take hold and room to grow.

Finally, some of the seed fell on good ground and produced a harvest. That is what the truth of God is supposed to do. It isn't a theory that we hold in our heads. It's a seed that is planted in our hearts. God puts it there to produce something good in our lives. Any farmer will tell us that a harvest never just happens. He has to work at it. I suppose ninety five percent of it depends on the sun, the soil, the seed and the rain. God handles the lion share, but the farmer's five percent is still important. Without it there would be no harvest.

So it is with your life and mine. God confronts us time and time again with the truth, plants some good seed in our hearts, and then expects a harvest. God gives us the potential to reap a full harvest.

Sometimes the harvest is nil, or it's thirty per cent or sixty per cent or hundred per cent. It will all depend on how we respond to the truth. Now what is this harvest? In brief it is all the good and positive things we produce in our lives.

Lord Jesus, let us start today with reaping a full harvest of love, kindness, generosity and availability. Let us give these top priority. Cultivate them, water them and watch them grow. That is the way to respond to truth. In partnership with You we may surprise ourselves with what kind of harvest could be produced in one little lifetime.