

## Lenten Devotional February 28, 2021

### Scripture

Mark 3:31-4:9

*31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." 4:1 Again he began to teach beside the lake. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the lake on the land. 2 He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"*

### Devotional

#### Carmen Lee '19

"Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." During Jesus' time, farmers used plows to prepare the soil for planting seeds rather than scattering them haphazardly on the ground. If seeds fell on a path, rocky ground, or among thorns, the problem could just as easily have been the harsh conditions in which the farmer labored as it could have been the planter's error. Yet in this parable there was enough good soil to yield an abundant crop, thus compensating for difficult conditions—and the seeds had to have been of good quality to grow even slightly in poor soil.

We know—because later Jesus tells his disciples so—that the seed is God's word of truth, and the soil represents the hearts of people who hear the word. But who are the people listening? We might assume that they are unbelievers—the unchurched or non-religious, lacking previous familiarity with God's word. But the crowds around Jesus usually represented the entire community, from religious leaders who questioned or wanted to sabotage him to working-class people who attended synagogue with varying degrees of regularity to "sinners" who were social and religious outcasts. It was that mix of people who heard Jesus' teaching and into whose hearts he planted God's word.

The situation is similar today. The mixed "soil" hearing God's word could include people we would consider church leaders or consistent church attenders, as well as those we might view as distant from God for whatever reason. The "seed" of God's word explains salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, but it also encompasses God's truth about justice and mercy as Jesus himself declares in passages such as Luke 4:16-21. There may be times when individuals who identify as Christians will not listen to God's truth about addressing injustice and oppression, just as there might be occasions when those who do not follow Christ reject the message of salvation.

The Parable of the Sower is often viewed as a warning to listeners to examine what type of soil represents the condition of their heart, but for those wanting to be used by God in others' lives, it is also an alert about what to expect. The world in which we live is a harsh environment, with much rocky and thorny soil; yet we should not judge anyone's heart. The good seed, God's word of truth, is hearty and

robust, capable of yielding an abundance of love, justice, mercy, compassion, and faith. The quality of the soil will reveal itself in due time; and as followers of Christ, we need to be aware of the challenges ahead while also being prepared to welcome a harvest.

Let anyone with ears to hear, hear.

**Prayer**

Gracious Lord with whom we co-labor, help us not to be discouraged by our world's difficulties but to find joy in your presence. As we look forward to celebrating our risen savior, Jesus Christ, enable us also to look forward to times of good harvest in its various forms. Amen.