

## Lenten Devotional March 16, 2022

### Scripture

Mark 4:1-20

1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea 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!"

10 When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; 12 in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.'" 13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

### Devotional

The Rev. Chris Taylor '19, Admissions Counselor / Miller SYI Program Coordinator

Wendell Berry's essay "Damage" offers a personal lament. Having dug a small pond to supply water for a track of land he wished to farm, Berry notes that a cold and wet winter resulted in the earth slumping, his pond now useless, his work undone. Bemoaning the defacement of the soil, he writes, "In general, I have used my farm carefully. It could be said, I think that I have improved it more than I have damaged it . . . But now a part of its damage is my own."

Sowing seeds necessitates the disruption of soil. Not always through extensive digging, but enough to allow creation to flourish over and against the damage of the earth. Till too little and the birds, sun, and thorns claim the growth; till too much and the soil becomes unhealthy, unstable, and marred. It is a delicate balance between tilling the earth for the sake of new growth and injuring the landscape. So it is with our hearts this Lenten season. From day one, Ash Wednesday, we contemplate our mortality and wrestle over the next 40 days about what it means that our savior is betrayed, is unfairly crucified, and dies on a cross. This disruption in us is necessary so that God's Word may take root and deepen our understanding of Christ's sacrifice. But the agitation in our hearts during Lent can also seem,

at times, like too much. How can God's Word find good soil, earth that has been disturbed and tilled, but not overworked by guilt or self-flagellation?

Sowing seeds, and the growing of God's Word in us, require some disruption of the soil and of our hearts. This Lent, as you walk from the cross and the tomb, right on to the promise of Easter and the full knowledge of the resurrection to come, may the stirrings of your heart be good soil in which to root God's Word and your life. May your heart find itself properly tilled in the promise of Christ's everlasting reign.

**Prayer**

Farmer God, till our hearts this Lent to be ready to receive your Word. Let us be places of growth where scattered seed may take root and flourish in the promise of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.