

July 16, 2017 Mt. 13:1-23 & Is. 55: 10-11

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [A wildflower moment](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [A Prodigal God](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[U tube link](#)

#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Parables are so useful. They get to their points by way of analogy. Like so many teaching tools they offer wisdom but only if we are ready to hear them. Jesus' followers lived close to the land so this makes this parable so powerful. If someone was not ready to make sense of the parable they could go on letting their distractions rob them of the meaning. Others got it, but quickly lost it. Still others got it, but old ways of doing things crowded the insight out. Finally the last ones not only got it, but made it fruitful for themselves and others. The question becomes where on this continuum am I this year?

(Note: Parallels: Mk. 4: 1ff; Lk. 8: 4ff)

Mt. 13:1-23

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such **large crowds** gathered around him that he got into a **boat** and **sat** in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many

things in **parables**, saying: "A **farmer** went out to **sow** his **seed**. 4 As he was scattering the **seed**, some fell along the **path**, and the **birds** came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on **rocky places**, where it did not have much **soil**. It sprang up quickly, because the **soil** was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were **scorched**, and they **withered** because they had no root. 7 Other **seed** fell among **thorns**, which grew up and **choked** the plants. 8 Still other **seed** fell on **good soil**, where it produced a crop--a **hundred, sixty** or **thirty** times what was **sown**. 9 He who has **ears, let him hear**." 10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in **parables**?" 11 He replied, "The **knowledge** of the secrets of the **kingdom** of heaven has been **given** to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be **given** more, and he will have an **abundance**. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be **taken** from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in **parables**: "Though **seeing**, they do not **see**; though **hearing**, they do not **hear** or **understand**. 14 In them is fulfilled the **prophecy** of **Isaiah**: "'You will be ever **hearing** but never **understanding**; you will be ever **seeing** but never **perceiving**. 15 For this people's **heart** has become **calloused**; they hardly **hear** with their **ears**, and they have closed their **eyes**. Otherwise they might **see** with their eyes, **hear** with their ears, **understand** with their **hearts** and turn, and I would heal them.'" 16 But blessed are your **eyes** because they **see**, and your **ears** because they **hear**. 17 For I tell you the truth, many **prophets** and **righteous** men longed to **see** what you **see** but did not **see** it, and to **hear** what you **hear** but did not **hear** it. 18 **Listen** then to what the **parable** of the **sower** means: 19 When anyone **hears** the message about the **kingdom** and does not **understand** it, the evil one comes and **snatches** away what was **sown** in his **heart**. This is the seed **sown** along the **path**. 20 The one who **received** the **seed** that fell on **rocky places** is the man who **hears** the **word** and at once **receives** it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When **trouble** or **persecution** comes because of the **word**, he quickly falls away. 22 The one who **received** the **seed** that fell among the **thorns** is the man who **hears** the **word**, but the **worries** of this life and the **deceitfulness** of wealth **choke** it, making it unfruitful. 23 But the one who **received** the **seed** that fell on **good soil** is the man who **hears** the **word** and **understands** it. He produces a crop, yielding a **hundred, sixty** or **thirty** times what was **sown**."

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus likens my ability to understand (i.e composting) to the quality of my soul "soil". What kind of soul soil has my composting created this year?

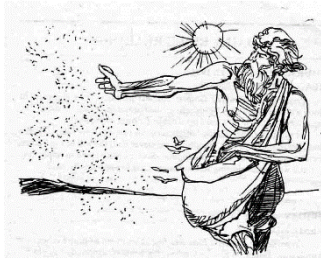
**PRAYER:** Lord, I must admit that at times my soul is rocky soil, other times it is a hard packed trail or full of briars and undergrowth. The joys and sorrows of my life can provide a rich loam of soil, only if I mature in my ability to love. Help me to stand under all those events in such a way that I become more and more understanding with good soul soil. Amen.

#### **WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

**LARGE CROWDS / BOAT:** By this time, the crowds have grown in size so much that Jesus needed to get into a boat in order to address the people.

*Have you ever experienced hearing voices from people in a boat? If so, does this help explain why Jesus chose this method to teach the crowd?*

**PARABLES:** (See below) Parables were a popular teaching tool in Jesus' day. The Rabbi's used them all the time.  
*What does this way of teaching protect? Encourage?*



**FARMER / SOWER / SOW / SOWN:** Jesus used examples in his teachings that were part of the everyday lives of his hearers.  
*If Jesus were to gather a crowd today, what example might he use to help people connect their everyday lives with his message?*

**PATH:** A path is a place trod by many people and is often a packed down with a hard surface.  
*Can a habit, or way of thinking, be a kind of a path? What are the 'paths' in my life?*

**BIRDS:** The birds find the seed on the hard paths easily and eat it before it can take root.  
*What 'birds' are flying in my life, ready to eat my 'seed'?*

**ROCKY PLACES:** Rocky places, like most of Jesus' world, are often places with little soil to receive seed.  
*Can you identify any rocky (thin soiled) places in my faith life? How do I remove the rocks?*

**SCORCHED / WITHERED:** A lot of heat is necessary to scorch something to the point of withering it.  
*Is anything scorching my ability to love and be loved? If so, how withered am I now?*



**CHOKED / CHOKER:** To choke something is to cut off something needed for its survival.  
*Is there anything choking off the flow of God's love in my life?*

**THORNS:** Thorns not only use up the soil and moisture available, but also make any possible harvest difficult.  
*Are there patches of thorns in my faith field? If so, what will it take to clear the thorns out?*

**ABUNDANCE / 100 / 60 / 30:** All these are examples of extraordinary yields.  
*Identify the sources of abundance of faith that produce extraordinary yields in my life.*

**GOOD SOIL:** Jesus is challenging the crowd to look inside themselves to see what kind of soil they were.  
*When you look inside today, what kind of soil do I find?*

**KNOWLEDGE / UNDERSTAND-ING / PERCIEVED:** Sometimes knowledge produces understanding and the ability to see, sometimes it does not.  
*How does this parable help me to understand and perceive the point Jesus was trying to make?*

**KINGDOM:** The kingdom of God was the drawing card for the crowds that gathered around Jesus.  
*What draws me to the gospel parables today?*

**GIVEN / TAKEN:** The ability of people to receive determines the outcome of their own personal 'harvests'.  
*How does scripture study help me in my ability to receive/harvest?*

**SEEING / SEE / PERCEIVING HEARING / HEAR / LISTEN / EARS / LET HIM HEAR:**  
Keeping your eyes, ears and mind open, enables you to plumb the depth of the parable.  
*What helps me remain open to God's word in my life?*

**WORD:** Jesus likens the seeds to words from God, sown freely upon all.  
*Has any gospel word become a rooted seed for you lately? If so, what is it?*

**PROPHECY / ISAIAH / RIGHTEOUS:** Isaiah is one of Matthew's favorite prophets.  
*Who is my favorite prophet? Why?*

**HEART:** The heart was thought to be the center of motivation/life of a person.  
*What is the center of motivation/life for me?*

**CALLOUSED:** A callus is the skins protective response to repeated friction or use.  
*How do I protect myself from friction or overuse? Can this protective behavior become a callus blocking God's love?*

**SNATCHES / DECEITFUL:** Deceit has the ability to snatch truth or insight from us.  
*What/ who I you give the power to snatch God's unconditional love from me?*

**TROUBLE / PERSECUTION / WORRIES:** All those gathered on the shore, and those who finally composed this gospel, were dealing with worries, troubles and persecution of some sort.

*Can my worries, troubles and 'persecutions,' become a source of deceit that can snatch God's love from me? Can this parable help me get free from those impediments? How?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 13:1-14 // Mk. 4:1-12; Lk. 8:4-10; **Mt. 13:10** // Mk. 4:25; Lk. 8:18; 19:26; **Mt. 13:13** // Jn. 9:39; **Mt. 13:14f** // Is. 6:9f; Jn. 12:40; Acts 28:26; Rom. 11:8; **Mt. 13:16f** // Lk. 10:23f; Acts 22:15; **Mt. 13:18-23** // Mk. 4:13-20; Lk. 8:11:15; **Mt. 13:23** // Jn. 15:8, 16;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Is. 55:10-11; [Ps. 65: 10-14](#); Rom. 8: 18-23; Mt. 13:1-23;  
Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 25:19-34; [Ps. 119: 105-112](#); Rom. 8: 1-11; Mt. 13: 1-9, 18-23;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

"How we see is what we see." Richard Rohr

Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.  
St. Augustine

But the parable of the Sower delivers a minority report. It issues a caveat. It raises some questions about the inevitable fulfillment of the promises. They appreciate the implied question we might imagine the apostles coming to Jesus to ask why they are not as successful as they expected to be. After all, isn't it obvious that his is the answer? What could be more plain? What are we doing wrong? Jesus answers with a parable that describes different soils, and how they respond to the Sower's art. The problem is not with the seed, for soils differ. In other words, persons respond freely to the invitation, and difficult as it is for the enthusiastic disciples to believe, some will say no. Fr. Robert Beck. Pg. 113. 2011

The parables reflect an observation and a love for both nature and human affairs. They reveal that Jesus saw God at the heart of nature and at the heart of human society. Pg.56. Denis Edwards. Jesus and the Cosmos

<http://americamagazine.org/media/podcasts/unfashionable-views-parables-jesus>

Jesus's parables, with their frequent theme of celebration and their warnings to those who fail to share this joy, unsettle, and at the same time the more we chew on them, the greater the smile that will cross our lips, the more food for thought we have, and the more we want to taste. Pg. 13 Levine, Amy-Jill. Short Stories by Jesus. Harper Collins. NY. 2014.

When church become a club, parables become pedestrian. Pg. 20. Levine, Amy-Jill. Short Stories by Jesus. Harper Collins. NY. 2014.

Instead, the parables more often tease us into recognizing what we've already always known, and they do so by reframing our vision. The point is less that they reveal something new than that they tap into our memories, our values, and our deepest longings, and so they resurrect what is very old, and very wise, and very precious. And often, be very unsettling. Pgs. 22-3. Levine, Amy-Jill. Short Stories by Jesus. Harper Collins. NY. 2014.

Every happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of life is to get the message Malcolm Muggeridge

The first time you consciously inhabit your ultimate place and act from your soul is the first time you can say, "Here" and really know what it means. You've arrived, at last, at your own center. As long as you stay Here, everywhere you go, geographically or socially, feels like home. Every place becomes Here. Bill Plotkin

I cannot live in mediocrity, content with merely knowing that there is more of God to experience and explore -- and then do nothing about it. Truths that are not experienced are, in effect, more like theories than truths. Whenever God reveals truth to us He is inviting us into a divine encounter. - Bill Johnson, "Face to Face with God"

Actually, the whole life of Christ is mystery, not just his Incarnation and Passover. His humanity itself is the primary sign of what divinity is. What is visible in his earth life leads to the hidden, invisible mystery of his divine sonship and universal mission of salvation. Jesus himself during his public life told his followers: Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you (Mt. 13: 11). Page 209.

Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies. Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

Gospel of Thomas: Saying 9; Jesus said, "Behold, the sower went out; he filled his hand; he threw. Some fell on the road. The birds came; they gathered them up. Others fell on the rock and did not send roots into the earth and did not send ears up to heaven. Others fell among thorns. They choked the seed, and the worm ate (the seed). And others fell on good earth, and it raised u good fruit to heaven. It bore sixty per measure and one hundred-twenty per measure."

But there were other reasons that Jesus told stories. For one thing, he was acutely aware of people. He knew that they were widely diverse in their perceptions and understanding as could be. He knew that no one easy tidbit from his lips would answer everyone's needs. He knew that people were at various stages on their life's journey. The story, as it turns out, with its multileveled meanings



and messages was just the right vehicle of communication for a universal religion. For another thing, Jesus respected each person's integrity and free will. He chose the story-parable because it, more than any other form, gives each person room to work on what was said. The use of the parable is automatically an invitation to the listener's involvement and response. Of course, any man or woman may listen and willfully not understand—Matthew nods to that 13.13-15 but that's the risk. But, on the other hand, the listener may be caught. He or she may ruminate and respond to his or her grace within the story. Parables are like that: with their concrete details of everyday life, their back-door message and sensitive images, they are seductive ways of involving the listener.

Bausch, William J. *Storytelling*, Twenty-Third Pub., Mystic, CT, 1984. Page 118.

The fall issue of [Parabola](#) is devoted to Grace. In “The Opposite of Gravity” by Bishop Seraphim Sigrist we find: “Grace is everywhere,” said St. Therese. “A Sower when out to sow”: so the Master began what is perhaps the most central of those stories by which he opened his mind and heart to us. The seed is Grace and light, indeed it falls into the world

as incessantly and as quietly as light, each photon a seed from which a world can be born, each seed a word that can heal a world, each a gesture that can draw together a broken world, each a barest touch making strong the gentle, each a hammer breaking rock. And we, each one, are all the soils – weed-choked and stony, deep and fertile – and, each one, all the worlds. We are each seed from the hand of the “Father of Lights. Seeds of light falling through the empty space at the heart of the star which is everywhere and in all things. Pg. 36.

“By their fruits you shall know them” is the Gospel criterion for authenticity, not a certificate issued by a proper authority.

Parr, Raymond. *Process Person Presence*, Thomas More Press, Chicago, 1990. Page 157.

An article dealing with the function of a parable can be found in Riddle and Mystery issue of *Parabola*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2000. This issue has many helpful insights for the understanding of the role of parables in history. Especially helpful is [Enigma, Paradox, Parable: What we can learn from what we don't know](#) by David Hoffman and Sharon Hoffman on pages 14ff.

A parable is a narrative taken from reality, albeit with some distortions, but without visions or miracles; it has a moral, normally overt; it is introduced by a statement that identifies it as a parable. R. Steven Notley & Ze'ev Safari

Jesus uses storytelling to change our world view, which is common among all spiritual masters. The evangelists call them parables. A parable confronts our common and convenient world and subverts it. It doesn't call for discussion, debate, or further questions; it is not God-as-information and quick answers. Rather it is God-as-invitation-revolution-and-challenge. A parable calls us to insight, freedom, and decision. A parable doesn't lead us to endless analysis; it's either a flashing insight or it's nothing. Richard Rohr

Challenge parables mean – that is, intend – to make us probe and question, ponder and wonder, discuss and debate, and, above all else, practice that gift of the human spirit known as thinking. Pg. 111.

Crossan, John Dominic. *The Power of Parable*. NY: HarperOne, 2012.

I don't know Who – or what – put the question. I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone – or Something – and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal. Dag Hammarskjöld.

We plant seeds that will flower as results in our lives, so best to remove the weeds of anger, avarice, envy and doubt, that peace and abundance may manifest for all. - Dorothy Day

"Chance favors the prepared mind." Ansel Adams

## SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2014. Pgs. 138-142. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2008. Pgs. 112-116. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2001. Pgs. 112-115. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)