

6/28/09 **"The Rich Soil that Produced a Bumper Crop" Luke 8: 1-8**

Jesus' parables have a unique character. In every single parable, Jesus puts the listener on the spot, so to speak. The listener cannot just walk away from him. Jesus makes the listener stop and think.

Parable of the Sower is no exception. A farmer goes out to his field to sow his seed. The seed that falls on the road is tramped down and is eaten by the birds. The seed that falls on the gravel withers quickly. The seed that falls in the weeds does not survive either. Only the seed that falls in the rich soil produces a bumper crop.

Three things are clear at the outset. One, Jesus is the farmer. Two, the seed is the word of God. Three, the word of God requires the rich soil to produce a good result.

But there is the fourth point that we should not overlook. That is Jesus' challenge to the listener: "Which are you? Are you the road? Are you the gravel? Are you the weeds? Or are you the rich soil?"

As Jesus was talking about the rich soil, he was specifically thinking of the three women named Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. Every one of those women had gone through serious spiritual crises of their own: Mary Magdalene had been plagued with seven demons. Joanna and Susanna, too, had suffered some serious diseases.

But that was not all they had in common. Their most important commonality was that each one of them had been healed and made whole by Jesus.

They had all experienced the healing power of Jesus who said, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden. I will give you rest."

Healed and made whole, they had become faithful followers of Jesus' mission. In short, they were the rich soil that produced a bumper crop.

Jesus is challenging us today as he was then. We, too, are called to be the rich soil that produces a bumper crop. We are called to be witnesses to the ultimate truth that we are all God's precious children regardless of social status, worldly success, and individual talent and ability, regardless of race, nationality, and ethnicity. In today's world where war and rumors of war are rampant, we are called to proclaim that even enemy is precious in the sight of God.

Jesus tore down the dividing wall of hostility and created peace. Today Jesus is calling us to be instruments of his peace in ordinary mundane life.

Many years ago, St. Francis of Assisi prayed the following prayer. "Make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy."

Today we are to make his prayer our own. Let us pray fervently for his power and grace so that we may be the rich soil that produces a bumper crop.

Rest assured: such prayers will be heard. They will be answered fully. We will be blessed.

Thanks be to God.

