

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

Parable Picnic

The Sower





Welcome!

This week marks the halfway point in our online VBS series. Even if you haven't joined us yet, it's not too late! Each week is a stand-alone event and you are welcome to jump in anytime.

Last week we talked about how persistence in prayer can change our hearts and conform our desires to God's will. Similarly, spending time diving into the figurative language of parables create time with the Lord for Him to change our hearts. We have time to marinate in the images and ideas that Jesus shares in the story. The more time we spend with it, the more it becomes part of us.

This packet provides additional resources to supplement our online events. You are welcome to print these pages and use them within your family. Please note that you do not need to print the pages to participate in the online events. Everything included here is optional and you may use it in the way that best meets the needs of your family. (Tip: If you want to save some ink, just print page 10!)

We invite you to pour yourself a glass of lemonade, serve a plate of juicy watermelon to the kids, and join our parable picnics!

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Mark your calendar!

Join us live on Facebook every Tuesday in July at 11am
www.facebook.com/stthomaszanesville

June 30	The Good Samaritan
July 7	The Persistent Friend
July 14	The Sower
July 21	The Mustard Seed
July 28	The Prodigal Son

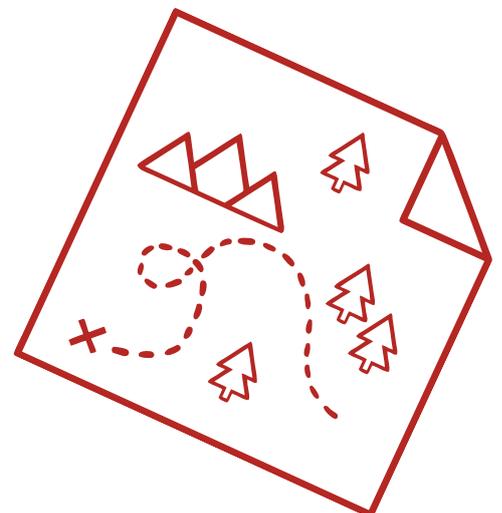


Let's Explore

Have you ever walked on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho? Do your neighbors frequently knock on your door in the middle of the night asking for bread? Do you spend time on a hillside taking care of sheep? If you answered no to any of these questions...good! We have a lot to explore and discover about the people, places, and customs of Jesus' time.

Each week we will take a closer look at one of Jesus's parables. We will read it together, look at artwork related to the parable, and learn about the context of the story.

By understanding a little more about the geography, customs, and beliefs of people and places in Jesus' time, we hope to learn more from his lessons.



Extend the Adventure



Click the underlined links below for additional resources & activities.

Make a sweet treat with [these](#) dirt dessert cups or buy the [kit](#).

Serve big slices of watermelon outside and practice spitting the seeds into the yard.

Create a seed mosaic using a bag of dry beans and rice. (The soup mix is my favorite to use in [this craft](#) because you get several shapes, sizes, and colors for one small purchase.)

Make your own icon at home with these [instructions](#).

Perler beads are almost as small as seeds and certainly seem to scatter! Round up your beads and try one of [these patterns](#).

Sow some of your own seeds; it's not too late to plant a garden! Follow [this calendar](#) to see what is best to plant in July. Alternatively, purchase bulbs to plant in the fall. Next spring you will reap the rewards!

Engage the littlest ones with this [sensory bin](#) for toddlers.

Create your own board game, like [this one](#), with materials you have at home.

Play a game of cornhole. Pretend you are the sower and try to get the seeds near the fertile ground to score more points.

Stay cool on a hot day and watch some videos on Formed.

- Younger children will enjoy [The Jesus Stories](#).
- Older children and teens will like [The Witness Trilogy](#).
- Adults can further reflect on the parable with this [lectio divina](#) video.

Share with us!

Adults can share pictures, completed projects, videos, and your own picnic using the hashtag [#parablepicnic](#) or email a copy to meghan.svatora@gmail.com. We will share it with the group during a future session!

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13: 1-9

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it has little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Mark 4: 1-9

On another occasion, he began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was by the side of the sea on the land. And he taught them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them, "Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed. Some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." He added, "Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Luke 8: 4-8

When a large crowd gathered, with people from one town after another journeying to him, he spoke in a parable. "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."



The Parable in Art



The Parable of the Sower

Questions to spark discussion:

- What do you notice in this painting?
- What do you think is the most important part of this artwork?
- What do you recognize in this scene?
- How would you describe this artwork to someone who could not see it?
- How is this picture different from real life?
- How would you describe the lines in this painting?
- What do you think is the most important part of this painting? Why?

Reflections



"The sower is Jesus. With this image, we can see that he presents himself as one who does not impose himself, but rather offers himself. He does not attract us by conquering us, but by donating himself: he casts seeds. With patience and generosity, he spreads his Word, which is not a cage or a trap, but a seed which can bear fruit.

Then, there is the last ground, the thorny one, filled with briars which choke the good plants. What do these thorns represent? "The cares of the world and the delight in riches" (v. 22), as Jesus says explicitly. The thorns are the vices which come to blows with God, which choke his presence: above all these are the idols of worldly wealth, living avidly, for oneself, for possessions and for power. If we cultivate these thorns, we choke God's growth within us.

Each of us can recognize his or her big or small thorns, the vices that inhabit the heart, those more or less deeply rooted briars that God does not like and that prevent us from having a clean heart. It is necessary to tear them out, otherwise the Word cannot bear fruit, the seed will not grow.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus invites us today to look inside ourselves: to give thanks for our good soil and to tend the soil that is not yet good. Let us ask ourselves if our heart is open to welcome the seed of the Word of God with faith. Let us ask ourselves if our rocks of laziness are still numerous and large; let us identify our thorns of vice and call them by name.

Let us find the courage to reclaim the soil, to effect a nice conversion of our heart, bringing to the Lord in Confession and in prayer our rocks and our thorns. In doing this, Jesus, the Good Sower will be glad to carry out an additional task: purify our hearts by removing the rocks and the thorns which choke his Word."

- excerpts from Pope Francis' Angelus address on July 16, 2017

Prayer Journal for Kids

SOAP Bible Study

SCRIPTURE: Write a few verses or even a few words that stand out in this parable.



OBSERVATION: What is God trying to teach me in this story? Look at who, what, when, where, and why.



APPLICATION: How does this apply to my life? What can I do with what I learned in this passage?

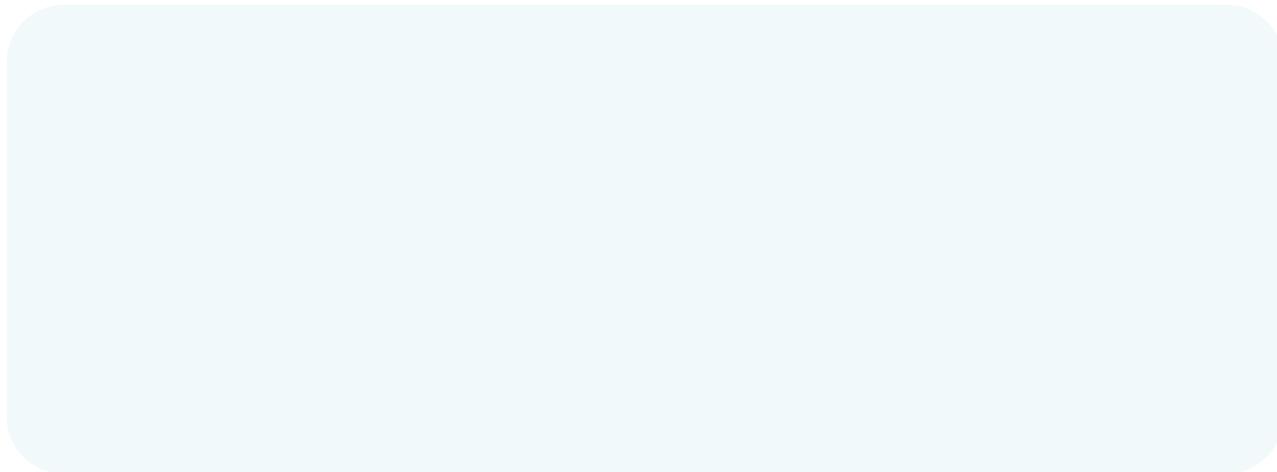


PRAYER: Write down a prayer or a few things to pray about based on your reflections.

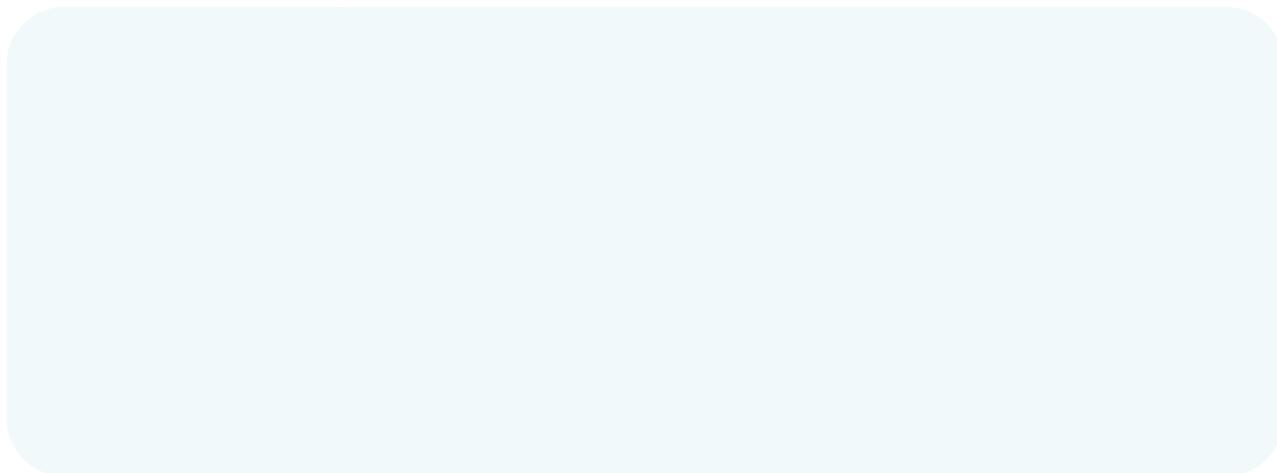


Prayer Journal for Teens

Why do you think there are four types of soil? What is Jesus trying to tell us with these different types? Could he get the same message across with just two types of soil?



What type of soil do you identify with at this time in your life?

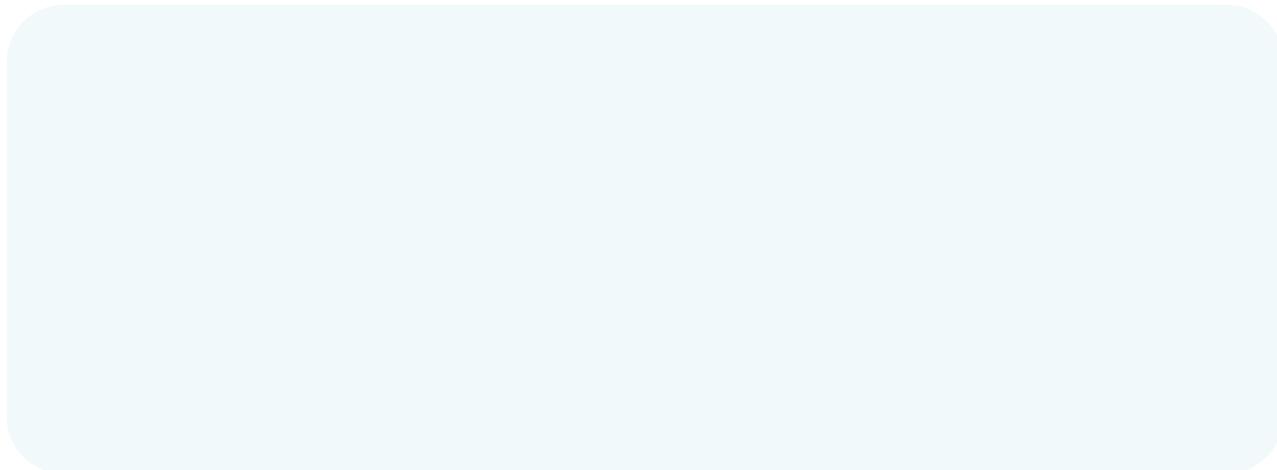


What would you need to do to have the rich, fertile soil in your heart?

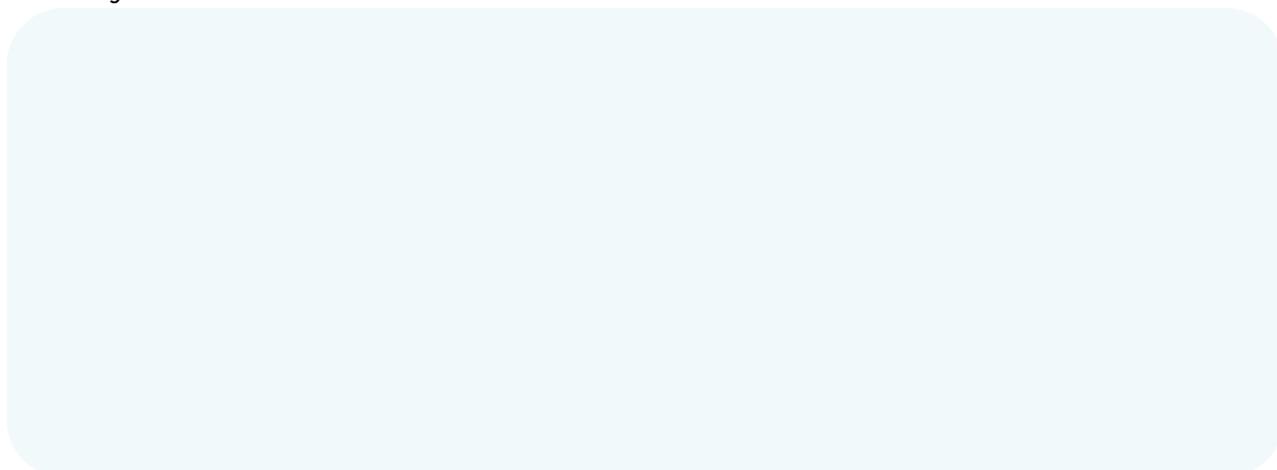


Prayer Journal for Adults

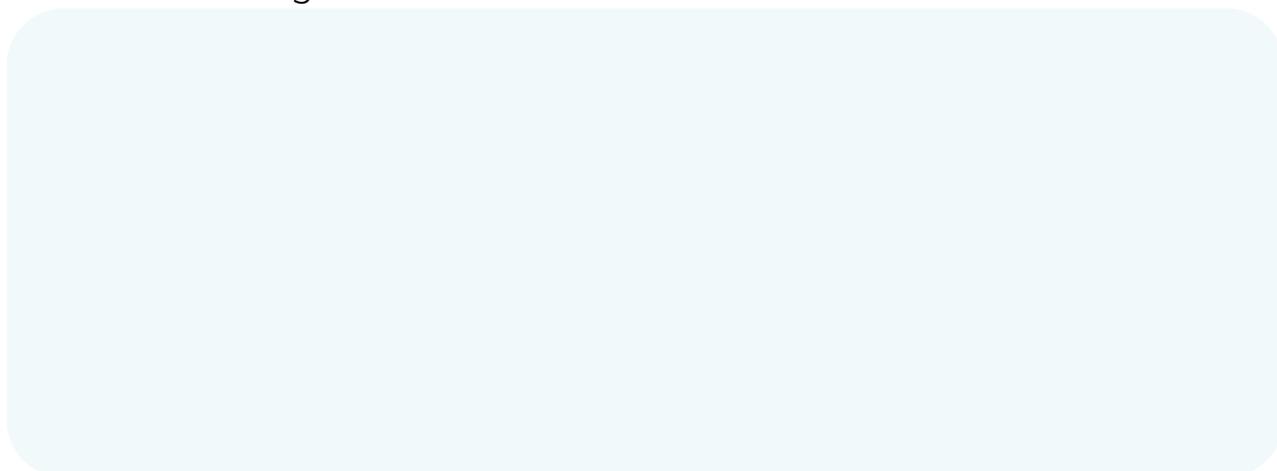
What thorns are growing up in your life and preventing the Word of God from taking root in your heart? List them and pray about how they might be removed.



How do you see this parable at work in your own life? What type of soil do you identify with at this time?

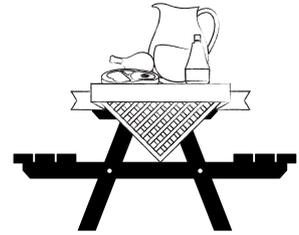


What could be the harvest of thirty, sixty, a hundredfold in your own life if your heart were fertile ground?



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The Sower

Questions for praying, journaling, & talking around the dinner table:

- Reflect on the parable using the S.O.A.P. method: Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer
 - SCRIPTURE: Write a few verses or even a few words that stand out to you in this parable.
 - OBSERVATION: What is God trying to teach me in this story? Look at who, what, when, where, and why.
 - APPLICATION: How does this apply to my life? What can I do with what I learned in this passage?
 - PRAYER: Write down your prayer or a few things that you will pray about based on your reflections.
- Why do you think there are four types of soil? What is Jesus trying to tell us with these different types? Could he get the same message across with just two types of soil?
- What would you need to do to have the rich, fertile soil in your heart?
- What thorns are growing up in your life and preventing the Word of God from taking root in your heart? List them and pray about how they might be removed.
- How do you see this parable at work in your own life? What type of soil do you identify with at this time?
- What could be the harvest of thirty, sixty, a hundredfold in your own life if your heart were fertile ground?

Discussion prompts when talking about the icon of Christ in the Parable of the Sower:

- What do you notice in this painting?
- What do you think is the most important part of this artwork?
- What do you recognize in this scene?
- How would you describe this artwork to someone who could not see it?
- How is this picture different from real life?
- How would you describe the lines in this painting?
- What do you think is the most important part of this painting? Why?

Save the date! You are invited each Tuesday in July at 11am:

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- July 21 - The Mustard Seed
- July 28 - The Prodigal Son