

JULY 23 2025 FATHER PETER JAE CHOI

****Faith and the Parable of the Sower****

Growing up in the city all my life, I knew very little about farming. That all changed a few years ago, when I tried planting cherry tomatoes, zucchini, hot peppers, and different kinds of herbs in the backyard. I remember going to the garden centre to buy seeds. They came in little packages, and I was surprised how expensive they were. So imagine if you were the farmer who had to sow an entire farmland. You would have to be strategic so you wouldn't be wasteful.

But what is so surprising, or even shocking, about this parable is that the sower sowed seeds everywhere, indiscriminately and wastefully. Even to places that didn't stand a chance for seeds to grow — on the path, on rocky ground with very little soil, and in thorny bushes. No farmer in his right mind would waste seed in that way. So, what was the sower exactly thinking? Every farmer knows that only the cultivated and rich soil yields an abundance of fruit.

The parable of the sower is not so much an instruction about farming as it is about the kingdom of God. The sower who planted lavishly and wastefully everywhere represents God, who generously planted the seeds of God's kingdom to everyone, no matter who or where we were in life.

Firstly, the seeds that fell on the path, which would have been the land outside the garden. When the seed fell on the path, unable to penetrate the hard ground, it would just sit there. Just like the hard ground, if our hearts are hardened and refuse to let God in, God's words and God's kingdom cannot penetrate the hardness of our hearts.

I know people who are hurt from the battle wounds of life's struggles and childhood trauma. They become angry with God and reject him

altogether. I went through this stage during my rebellious teenage years. I was angry with God and with myself, and I erroneously thought that by rejecting God I would somehow find my freedom and happiness. Slowly and painfully, I learnt that I was wrong, and that true happiness couldn't be attained apart from God. Instead, it could only be achieved in God and with God's help.

There is an important lesson regarding the seeds sown on the path. In order for the seed to grow, the path required the most amount of transformation, even more than the rocky ground or the thorny bush. The compacted ground needed to be ploughed, broken, and mixed with rich soil. Only through complete transformation would it be ready for planting. In the same way, it is only when we surrender to God and accept what God is doing in our life that we can make the journey of growth and healing, and be ready to bear fruits of God's kingdom in our life.

Secondly, the seed on the rocky ground, which would be the land on the edge of the garden and has very little soil. With not much soil, even though it would spring up quickly, it got scorched and withered away. Just as a seed needs good soil for it to grow deep roots, our faith needs to be deep-rooted so it can withstand life's challenges and trials.

The Hebrew slaves who were freed from slavery in Egypt, from the first reading today, thought to themselves that their lives were supposed to be smooth sailing from then on. They wanted God to just hand them everything they needed. Every time they encountered an obstacle, being thirsty or hungry in the desert, instead of relying on God by asking him, they complained. I think that's why God put them in the Sinai desert in the first place. By removing everything they could rely on, except for God himself, God was putting them through a training exercise on faith and trust. They needed to come to a realization that God was their sole provider, and God alone suffices.

Just like the prayer Saint Teresa of Avila used to say, "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing away; God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices."

Thirdly, the thorny bush. This land has been neglected and not cleared of weeds. I live in a corner house, where I know the destructive power of weeds. Every time wind blows my way, I end up with all kinds of weeds that my neighbours have in their front lawn and backyard. So if I don't catch and destroy the weeds right away, it will soon overtake my front lawn and the entire garden in the backyard.

Attachment to wealth and material possessions are like that. Worldly ambitions, with no consideration or compassion for others, will slowly overtake and eventually dominate our life, destroying our spiritual life altogether.

Farming, and even gardening, requires significant time and care. Our spiritual life requires time and commitment. We need to spend time weeding out everything that competes with God's kingdom in this life. If we don't make a firm commitment to our faith, it will be impossible for the kingdom of God to become the foundation of our lives.

Finally, the rich soil. The rich soil is capable of bearing many full fruits. This isn't something we have to do or could do, no, far from it. Rather, it is something we have to relinquish so God can accomplish it in and through us.

We have wonderful examples of modern-day saints whom we can all relate to, like Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, who will both be canonized this September. Pier Giorgio made many personal sacrifices to help the poor: giving away his own jacket in winter to clothe the homeless, giving away his train fare and running home after school so he

could feed the homeless, and giving away his own money that could've bought him a car so he could help the poor.

Carlo Acutis had a tremendous love for the Lord from a young age, and inspired so many young people by the witness of his faith and love for God. Both lived a very short life, but still, they made a huge mark in the world.

You see, saints weren't born saints. They were transformed into saints through the unshakable foundation of faith they built their lives on, and the power of love that helps to inspire and shape our world. You see, it's not money or power, but it's faith and love that makes a difference.