

The Sower

A Harvest Service Suggestion from Rev'd Barry Osborne

This is an adapted talk based on one I heard many years ago. I have forgotten the source and hope that I have not transgressed copyright.

It is a bit of fun and works well in a family service or school. If you are good at art you might try to draw the images while you give the talk (or find someone good at cartoon drawing who will do the drawing while you talk!).

It is based on the parable of the sower, which you can find in Matthew chapter 13. The point of the parable (and therefore this talk) is to emphasise it is how God's word about the kingdom of God is *received*. The one message can produce different results.

Begin the talk by explaining that it based on one of the stories that Jesus told, but that after some research you have discovered an interesting fact. The following steps assume that someone will develop the picture step by step.

Step One:



Our story begins on a day when a farmer went into his field to sow some wheat. In those days there were no tractors or other machines, so farmers had to scatter the seed which they kept in a bag over their shoulder.

Step Two:



There was a pathway in the field. So many people had walked on it that it was really hard ground. Some of the farmer's seeds fell on the pathway. Soon birds came and ate it up so it could not grow.

Did you know that this seed was called MARK? (Write Mark near the pathway)

Step 3:



Some of the seed fell into the ground and soon began to grow. But under the surface of the field there were lots of stones so that the roots could not go very deep. When the sun came up it burned the new wheat and it withered and died. This one was called PETER.

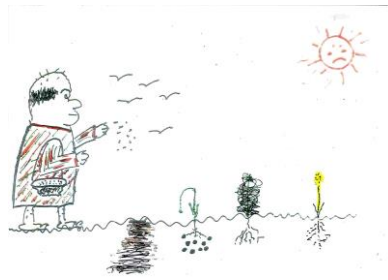
(Write the name close to the withered plant)

Step 4:



Some of the seed fell into the ground where there were no stones. The roots went down deep, and it grew up strong. Unfortunately, there were a lot of weeds in that part of the field, and they also grew and choked the wheat so that it died. This seed was called LUKE. (Write the name near the choked plant.)

Step 5.



Fortunately, some of the seed fell into soft soil, where there were no stones and where there were no weeds. Over the following weeks it grew up strong and produced a lot of seed at the top of the stalk. After a while it turned a beautiful golden colour ready for harvest. The farmer was so happy that some seed brought him a bumper harvest.

At this point, pause and look at your drawing thoughtfully. Slowly recite the names: Mark Peter, Luke..... What do you think this seed is called? Invite suggestions. Usually because people recognise names from the Bible they come up with other Bible names. After several wrong guesses, tell them that this seed was called PERCY (write the name near the fruitful wheat).

Now explain that most people have at least two names and all the seeds had two names as well.

Add TIME to the seed on the pathway, Add OUT to the seed that withered in the sun. Add WARM to the seed among weeds.

Explain that when soldiers “MARK TIME” it means they march on the spot. (Can you demonstrate this?) They use a lot of energy but they never go anywhere when they MARK TIME. Some people hear the message about God’s love and Jesus dying on the cross because of our sins. But the message never gets deep into their heart and Satan can steal away like the birds did the seed.

Explain that some people welcome the message about Jesus and are keen to follow him. But when people laugh at them, or call them names, or are nasty to them because they are Christians, then they give up. They start well but PETER OUT.

Explain that some people who hear the message about Jesus are also keen to follow him. But they also love lots of other things. Some love money. Some love popularity. Some love spending too much time playing games or watching television. So they do not find time to spend with Jesus, to talk with Jesus, or to read the Bible. They become LUKE WARM (neither hot nor cold). Soon they forget about Jesus altogether, just like the weeds choked the wheat.

By this stage in the story they might have worked out what PERCY’s other name is. You could invite suggestions I have heard some funny ones. It is, VERE. You may need to explain what it means to persevere. Explain that there are some men and women, boys and girls, who hear about Jesus and why he came into this world, and died and then rose again. Some will spend time learning how to be a true disciple of Jesus. They will read their Bible often. They will talk with Jesus in prayer. They spend time with Christian friends encouraging others to be good disciples too. They persevere.

NOTE: The full set of PowerPoint slides for this talk (which include intermediate drawings) can be found under free resources at www.ruralmissionsolutions.org.uk.