



## Grain

“What is the sound of one hand clapping?” Zen koan

## Field

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 Let anyone with ears listen!" Mt. 13:1-9

## Thoughts

I remember a psychology professor discussing a study about positive thinking in people of various professions. Salespeople ranked high. That made sense. They are accustomed to working for hours with potential clients who in the end may change their minds about a deal. But salespeople need to stay positive for future potential customers. It sometimes feels this way in the realm of advocacy.

Jesus seemed to be preparing his followers to hear some loud noes as well as yeses that would default into a noes. And when sharing God's love, we know hearts can be broken. Some of the same people nodding in the crowd would later deny Jesus. And even one of the inner circle disciples would betray him. However, it's important to keep spreading the seeds because it is really God sowing them and the power of God yielding fruit from the good soil.

This story, like all parables, have layers. Parables might prepare us for what to expect as Jesus' followers. They may seem like coded language for people who are exploring the meaning of their lives, while the same words escape the ears of those who grasp for reasons to twist what Jesus says. Aspects of the parables can be explained, as Jesus often does to his disciples in private. But they also engage us beyond our own rational thoughts into deeper insights. A Buddhist might compare parables to Zen koans, those paradoxical phrases and questions one meditates upon to be moved into having epiphanies. For example, what does it mean to be good soil? It is difficult to immediately judge the meaning, and it may serve us better to let the question draw us into prayer and reflection.

As we delve into parables in the coming weeks, may God lead you to answers and holy questions that engage you with the Gospel. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy