

DIGGING INTO THE SOIL OF YOUR SOUL

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July 10, 2011, The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

It's summer so, let's have some fun. Instead of the usual sermon let's do a guided meditation. Let me explain why and how.

An Old Friend

Families tell stories and the stories themselves become like old friends. The parable of the sower is like an old friend, so comfortable to be around. We have heard the story before. We can just nod along, like we do with a long-time spouse who is telling a childhood story, from a time before we knew him or her. We were not there at the original happening, but we have heard the story so many times, it is as if we were. We know the intonation of the story – the beginning, middle, and end and what it all means. We can tell it and interpret it to the next generation. It is part of the narrative of the collective family lore.

Parable of the Sower

That is what the parable of the sower is like. We all know the story of the parable of the sower, about the seed and where it lands and what happens to it and what it means. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out. Jesus gives us the answer and since we are all Jesus' friends and family, we all think of ourselves as the good soil with the phenomenal growth. Ain't it great? But it leads to no growth. It does not make us any more fruitful.

Purpose of Parables

Even with the old hymn, "You've got a friend in Jesus," and with Jesus calling his disciples friends at the end of John's Gospel, Jesus did not tell parables to be comfortable old friends. Most often just the opposite. Most parables are meant to elbow you in the head, to shock us out of our complacency. Parables are metaphorical teachings about the kingdom of God. But more than that they are meant to cause contemplation, kind of like a Zen koen. But even more than knowledge and contemplative insight, they are intended to cause metanoia, conversion of life. Parables are meant to change us into the kingdom of God. It is a tall order, particularly if we dismiss it as, "I have heard it all before and because of that I hope Peter keeps it short this morning."

Something Different

So with that said, let's keep it short, make it contemplative and see if this teaching might lead to a little metanoia, conversion of life. As Monty Python used to say, "And now for something completely different." Let's do a guided imagery exercise this morning. In other words, I am going to be your guide on an interior journey that only you can take. I am not going to tell you what any of it means. That is between you and your Lord. Some of you have done this before and will find it easy and others will find it difficult. Some will find

it fruitful and some will not. But do not worry about it. Just let it be. After all, not every sermon and every meditation produces life changing results. But some do and the cumulative effect over time does. So here we go.

Sit back. Rest your head on top of your backbone. Find that balance spot and settle down and sit in it. Find a comfortable place for your hands and soften your shoulders. Just sit. No stress.

Now close your eyes and soften your face. Let the room begin to fade away. Let your neighbors fade away. No one is looking at you. They are all doing the same thing you are doing. We are all going on an individual journey together.

Now start to drift inward. No rush. Just let it be. Follow your breath in and with each breath begin to go farther in, deeper down. Again no stress. Let your breath be your guide. Ride it inward, ever deeper. Go in, go down. It's a big place in there. If you are able, follow it down through your torso and maybe ever deeper. Down. Down.

Interior Landscape

Now begin to imagine the ground of your soul, the ground of your being, that deepest place, that foundation of who you are. Just be there down at the bottom. The interior landscape rolls on and on and on and on, over the horizon, beyond what the interior eye can see. Can you see a horizon? There are all types of soil in there, just as there are all types of soil from coast to coast in the United States.

Path

Take a look. Are there any paths in your soul, well-worn thought processes trodden and beaten down by the daily pound of just living life? Can you see any of God's seed upon that path – seeds of light and life and love that yearn to live on your daily path? Can you see

seeds of holy ideas not fully grasped but snatched away before they can take root and change us? What takes them away? Why is your daily path not more fruitful and open to the word of God?

Rocky Ground

Do you have any rocky ground in there? Any shallow turf in your soul? Can you see it? This is the graveyard of good ideas, the ghost of New Year's resolutions gone by, the place of little resolve, where metanoia and conversion does not quite happen. Do you have holy resolutions that never quite came to fruition that just do not stand up to the heat of life and the habits of your heart? Are there any dead ideas lying on the ground of your soul?

Thorns

Do you have any thorny places in the soil of your soul? These places grow wild like the cares of the world. They consume large tracks of the turf of our soul. What are you so worried about? Look around for beautiful weeds, for bittersweet that is beautiful but wraps itself around the good plants, the good urges, and chokes them to death. Why can't the good plants and weeds live together? Are you fooling yourself? Do you have cares for comfort that choke off your spiritual journey so that it cannot grow? Do you live in a prison of pre-occupation? Or, are you shackled by golden handcuffs?

Good Soil

Now go to the good soil of your soul, to those fields of golden grain where God is at work in your life bringing forth the fruit of love. Give thanks for the fields of fruitfulness that stretch beyond the horizon of your knowing. Look at the goodness and fruitfulness of your life.

New seed

Now imagine that the hand of God is above your soul. I imagine that as far as the soul stretches there is a new seed flung and flying

and floating and landing and coating the four corners of your soul, from side to side and sea to sea. The seed is alive with God, alive with light and life and love and it is spread and sprinkled everywhere? How does it feel to have the word of God coming to you landing and living in your deepest places? Breathe deep and enjoy it. What will you do to be an interior farmer, to cultivate that seed to bring it to life? Can you expand the bread basket of your soul? The Lord needs you. It is true you are to be food for a needy world, a holy harvest of great growth. Blessings are bound to compound.

Come Back

Now it is time to come back from the ground of your being, to the floor of your church. Feel your feet. Breathe your way back up. Take your time. Open your eyes. Sit there for a bit. The Lord loves you. Let it be. Amen.