

If you're not in a home group, and if you're not in a group of three reading the bible together, holding up Jesus' image to each other, praying for each other and Jesus' kingdom, good news. You can start today. Not because it's some gimmick, but because Jesus is here pointing out how important having depth is. That's what he wants, a deep, strong, intimate, loving relationship which hangs in there, for better or for worse. If you are in a home group, taking the time to care for each other, and in a group of three reading the bible together, helping each other grow as Jesus' disciples, praying for one another and Jesus' kingdom, keep up the good work, and

continue to enjoy getting to know Jesus in a deeper, more personal way.

If you were to ask me to describe the Kingdom of Jesus that's how I'd describe it. Living in a deep, personal, relationship with Jesus, following him where ever he goes, because I know he is 100% committed to me, totally loyal, and as faithful as the day is long.

And I'm sure the fruit Jesus is after is people. People living with him in a deep, personal, loving relationship, characterised by his commitment, loyalty and faithfulness. I'm sure the fruit Jesus is after is us getting to know him better, and allowing him into our lives more and more.

I'm sure Jesus is after the fruit of mature disciples, who together with him birth new disciples, growing them to maturity that they might birth new disciples, growing them to maturity, sharing life together with Jesus heart to heart.

Let us pray. Jesus this week help us to plant the seed of your kingdom, and help us to be growing to ever greater maturity in you, enjoying sharing life with you in all it's complexity, in the ups and downs, even in the heat of battle. Let everything we face grow us closer to you, deepening our commitment to you, growing our loyalty, and ever increasing our faithfulness in you. Amen.

## Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am  
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Jesus' Disciples, who grow disciples, who grow disciples, who grow disciples...

10 July 2011

## PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23



Can you recall what Jesus first of all equated with the seed in this parable? My first thought is 'The Word'. But when I went and read what Matthew had written this is what I found; "When people hear the message about the kingdom..." (Matt. 13:19)

What is the message about the kingdom? How would you answer another person if they asked you about Jesus' kingdom?

This week I've been reading through Hebrews and there I have been reminded that Jesus' kingdom has to do with obedience. Paul quoting from the Old Testament; "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the

rebellion..." (Heb. 3:7,8)

The first condition that stops the seed from growing is when it hits hard ground. When I allow my heart to become hardened, as the children of Israel did in their rebellion, Jesus' kingdom finds no place to grow.

Paul contrasted the obedience of Jesus to the Father's will with that of the Children of Israel who despite all they saw and experienced found it easier to trust their own judgment, and to do what they felt was right. That's rebellion. Which is the essence of sin.

Sin isn't good verses bad, but obedience verses rebellion, listening to God and following where ever

he leads verses trusting my own sanctified reason and ability to achieve my goals.

I don't want to be hard-hearted. How can we guard against becoming so self-absorbed that our will is done above all other? I want to be open and receptive to Jesus. I want to be following him that his will is done, on earth as in heaven, right now.

What do you do to stop yourself from becoming hard, from becoming deaf to what Jesus has to say and is doing? After Jesus told this parable he said; "Whoever has ears, let them hear." (Matt. 13:9) Which strikes me as somewhat cryptic. But ears are the openings in our head that allow soundwaves in. How am I open to Jesus?

First I need to be committed to him, to be sold out to follow Jesus, doubting everything and everyone else. My one solid foundation is Jesus, everyone else and everything else is suspect in comparison. Commitment, Loyalty, Faithfulness to Jesus are attitudes that allow Jesus' soundwaves to penetrate my heart and soul.

One way to erode our commitment, loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus is to turn him into a teacher we follow. Then I begin to compare teachings, and then I start debating teachings and subtly having what is considered a positive outcome, usually me feeling healthy, wealthy and comfortable, becomes the standard. Jesus is no longer the standard, but I judge what he says by what I'll get. Once the devil has sucked me into this

way of thinking, he's achieved his goal of making me hard-hearted. Jesus now has to measure up to my standards.

What does Jesus say about being his disciple? Last week we heard, "Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not

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### Jesus Kingdom: what is it?

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worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it." (Matt. 10:38,39) As Jesus disciple he becomes the standard by which I now measure everything and everyone. I give up everything else, I abandon my wealth as my means of security, I abandon my comfort as my life goal, I abandon other people's praise as the measure of success.

I'm totally committed to Jesus, even if that means losing money, looking stupid, or missing out on what everyone else is enjoying. I'm loyal to Jesus, as he is totally loyal to me. I'm faithful to Jesus knowing his undying love and faithfulness for me.

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Of course these three attitudes; commitment, loyalty and faithfulness Jesus shows as being basic to any healthy

relationship. As my relationship grows with Jesus he's growing me in my ability to build healthy personal relationships with other people. The healthy foundation isn't how do I feel, nor what's in it for me, but giving commitment, being loyal, and forever faithful.

This quickly removes any semblance of arrogance, the greatest killer of any relationship. If you

want to be hard-hearted the quickest way is to believe you're right all the time. It's to stand as judge, weighing up what others do and say, passing some, condemning others. And soon your role is to point out to people where they need to change; after all its for their good. It can be very easy to become arrogant, living as if you're right and you have the right to judge others, for their good of course.

What does Jesus do? This week I also read in Hebrews; "Since the children have flesh and blood he (that's Jesus) too shared in their humanity... Because he himself (that's Jesus) suffered when he was tempted, his is able to help those who are being tempted." (Heb. 2:14,18) Jesus doesn't stand over, he's not a standover merchant. Jesus stands with us. Jesus stands alongside of us. Jesus knows us

intimately, he's taken on our very humanity. He's walked a mile in our shoes. So Jesus loves us to change, not for what he can get out of it, but simply because you're precious to him. Jesus wants to give his life that you might find life in all his fullness and not be cheated by some pretty

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### Commitment Loyalty Faithfulness

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substitute, which can't deliver on what it promises. The second type of soil mentioned by Jesus didn't allow the roots of the plant to go deep. Jesus wants us to move from baby disciples to mature adult disciples who know how to give birth, and nurture other disciples to maturity. How do we grow maturity in Jesus kingdom?

I'd begin by spending lots of time with Jesus; listening to him and talking to him about life, inviting him into every area of my life. One way to do that is to partner with two other people, reading the bible and sharing what you hear Jesus saying. Holding up Jesus image to each other so you are kept on track. And then praying for each other, and that Jesus' kingdom might grow, trying to be specific.

Jesus in this parable reminds me that maturity as his disciple isn't an optional extra, but essential if we are to face the ups and downs of life, especially when we face ridicule for our faith in him. We're living in a war zone, and the devil is only too happy to see immature disciples. They're easy picking, because once the pressure is on they'll be tempted to move to some place more comfortable.