

## St Martins C3 – March 9, 2025

### *The Lost Seeds - Groundwork*

#### **Sermon Notes:**

There are barriers to growing as disciples of Jesus. Over the next four weeks we will explore those barriers through Jesus' parable in Matthew 13:1-9.

Jesus' parables are not just stories but they are like houses to live in and windows to see the world through. As we engage with this parable, we shift our perspective and examine our receptiveness to Jesus' way of life.

#### **Read Matthew 13:1-9**

There is an age-old principle in gardening: *If you want to grow healthy plants, you work at it; if you want to grow weeds, do nothing.* To grow we need to do the groundwork.

The footpath represents a hardened heart—where the message of Jesus is heard but not understood, and the enemy snatches it away before it can take root. They are lost seeds.

#### **Application One: Life**

Many refuse to open themselves to things that could bring positive change. Why do we refuse to listen to sound advice?

- We prioritise the present over the future
- We protect ourselves from the perceived harm in those ideas
- We don't understand the benefit

## *Humility + Hunger = Transformation*

When we acknowledge we don't know everything and seek truth, real change happens.

### **Application Two: The Gospel**

These seeds Jesus is throwing represent an understanding of who He is and what He came to do.

- Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh.
- He claimed that He revealed God's nature to the world.
- He was making a way for people to know God.
- He came to bring God's way of life to all who were open.

Jesus' message invites people into God's Kingdom, but many reject it. Some are hurt by religion and equate human failure with God's nature. Yet, God is still at work in the world, revealing Himself to those who are want to receive Him.

### **Application Three: Discipleship**

Even believers can be closed off. The Pharisees rejected Jesus because they thought they had it all figured out. Christians today may resist areas of spiritual growth.

What area of your life is a hardened footpath? Where have you resisted God's work? This week, reflect on this statement:

*"I want to be more open to God in \_\_\_\_\_."*

It's time to get hungry for the things of God and become humble enough to change.

## Questions for Connect Groups:

### Key Point

Being open to God's truth is essential for discipleship, and a hardened heart can cause us to miss out on God's life for us.

### Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

If God were walking towards you on a dirt road, where would He be in relation to you?

Read the parable together. Which soil do you relate to most?

What are some everyday examples where people resist good advice or truth, even when it would benefit them?

What are some reasons people may be closed off to Jesus' message? How can we encourage openness to the gospel?

What area of discipleship was a hardened footpath for you? How did you open yourself to growth in that area?

The message challenged us to reflect on lost seeds. Which of the five common resistances (stillness, deep relationships, evangelism, supernatural faith, generosity) do you struggle with most? Are there others?

What step can you take to become more open to God in an area where you've been resistant? How can we support you?

## **Monday Devotion: Who Needs Stillness?**

***Read Psalm 46:8-11; Luke 5:16***

This week we talked about the Kingdom ideas that Christians often resist. These are the footpaths in our lives where seeds of life are lost. Fear, pride, or a lack of understanding cause us to harden ourselves to some of these ideas.

The first is the idea of being still before God. As we discussed in our Encounter series, being still with God is the catalyst to much of our growth as Christians.

Tyler Staton says it the best:

*“It is in the stillness of silent prayer that God turns over the soils of our hearts, revealing our desires to us and the source of their fullest satisfaction. When we stop moving, stop talking, and arrive quiet and present before God, he takes all of our disordered desires, distorted attachments, and co-dependency’s and transforms them into love.”*

We resist this in our lives for many reasons. Busyness feels productive, but silence is uncomfortable. Technology and distractions make it difficult. Sometimes we fear what God might reveal when we slow down. What causes you to neglect the time of stillness before God?

Tyler Staton has great suggestions for us. He suggests setting a timer so we won’t be tempted to check the time. Spend two minutes in silence before God. In a month, make it four minutes. In two months, go up to eight minutes. See if you can make it to ten minutes. Why not give it a try today?

## **Tuesday Devotion: Discipling Relationships are Too Difficult**

***Read Proverbs 27:17; James 5:16***

The second seed that the birds eat up if our hearts are resistant is the importance of other people in our faith journey. There is a tendency to make faith a solo journey when it is supposed to be a team sport.

There is great value in doing life with other Christians. Even today, I met with a person I trust and was able to share my struggles with them and receive wise advice, and prayer. It made a significant difference for me.

The reason people resist this is largely to do with fear. We fear judgement and rejection. What if we are vulnerable and the person we share with looks at us and says: "I can't be your friend anymore"? It might be easier to independently sort things out by ourselves.

The best way to overcome these barriers is to start small and grow from there. Start with one trusted person and build that relationship intentionally. Share a little bit and see if they are trustworthy with what you share. If they are trustworthy with a little, then you know you can trust them with much more.

Remember that growth happens in community, whereas independence leads to isolation. Try refocussing your perspective and viewing accountability as a gift, not a burden. Reach out to someone this week and grab a coffee with them. Determine to grow together.

## **Wednesday Devotion: Evangelism is Awkward**

***Read Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 1:16; Acts 4:29***

The next area where many Christians are resistant is the area of evangelism. We all know evangelism is important, and we should talk to more people about Jesus' love for them.

We know we have the message of hope for the world, and they need to hear it. We believe that the gospel is powerful and that someone's acceptance of the good news will lead to their benefit now and in the age-to-come.

But let's be honest, evangelism is a bit awkward. There are two things you shouldn't talk about: politics and religion. If we bring it up with the wrong person, they might reject us or become offended. Or they might ask a question we don't know the answer to. This leads many to conclude it is not for them, and they resist growing in this area.

A mindset change is needed here. Evangelism is much bigger than just asking someone to become a Christian. The good news is the way that Jesus came to make a difference in every aspect of life. We bring the good news when we pray for others. We bring the good news when we show love and concern for another person. Everything we do in the name of Jesus is part of our evangelism.

If you consider evangelism is too hard, begin by praying for others and then showing love. God will then show you the right time to boldly share about how to come into a relationship with Him.

## **Thursday Devotion: Does Praying Even Work**

***Read John 14:12; Mark 9:23***

I know we finished yesterday by asking you to make evangelism easier by spending time praying for others. But praying for others is another area that many Christians resist. If asked to pray for healing or some need in their life, they don't know where to start.

There is a:

- Fear of disappointment if nothing happens.
- Doubt in God's power or their own worthiness.
- Cultural scepticism about the supernatural.

Whilst these things are very real, we need to remember that results are in God's hands, not ours. Start by praying for smaller things and build your faith.

I once listened to some teaching on praying for others, and they had some simple advice:

- Begin by asking for God to meet the person.
- Watch and see what God is doing.
- Ask God to do more.

It wasn't about clever words or supernatural faith. It was about simple trust that when you invite God's Spirit, He will turn up. As we pray in this way, we might hear an idea or scripture that we can pray for that person. We might also discover that God touched their lives in a weighty way.

Why not begin by praying for another Christian? Be open to the moving of His Spirit through you today.

## **Friday Devotion: Generosity Costs Too Much**

***Read 2 Corinthians 9:7; Luke 6:38***

One of the most tragic lost seeds is in the area of generosity. As we are generous with our money and our time, God does a powerful work inside of us.

The scriptures today tell us that when we give that it will be given back to us. This is not primarily referring to a monetary return. This is not a financial investment scheme, instead generosity is an investment into your soul.

Remember what Dr Seuss said about the Grinch. It was his understanding that material possessions are not what make Christmas special that caused his heart to grow bigger. He then embraced radical generosity.

When we overcome our attachment to money and comfort and deny the fear of lack, we can see something happen inside of our hearts too.

God looks after His children. He wants us to prosper, but the greatest place that should happen should be inside of us.

Consider what generosity looks like for you this week. Determine to find one need that you can fill with your possessions, time or energy and determine to meet it. Give joyfully, not just out of duty and determine to trust in God's faithfulness in your life.