

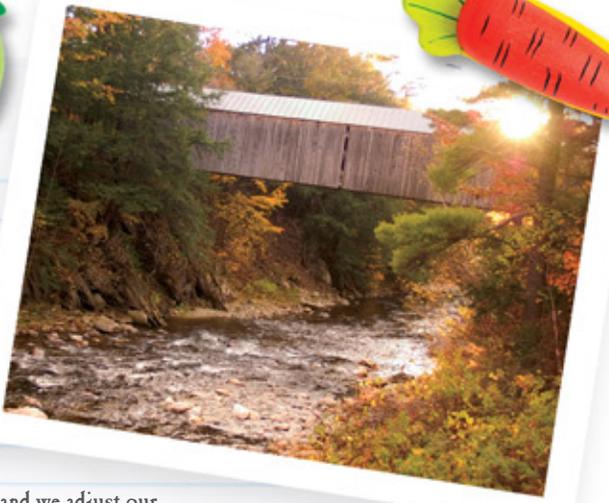
Sunday Summary

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Today's reading begins this gospel's third great discourse, called the discourse of the kingdom, or the parable discourse, because it is built up from seven parables. In its original setting, the parable of the sower was probably one of contrast, pointing to the superabundant yield for the kingdom in the last days despite the past and present frustrations and the apparent lack of success of God's work in Israel's history and in Jesus' ministry.

The allegorical interpretation of the parable shifts attention from the harvest to the varying conditions in the field, from the coming of judgment to the spiritual receptivity of the hearers of the gospel. It exhorts converts to assess the depth of their response.

Weekly Reflection



All gardeners must envy the inevitable, abundant harvest promised in Matthew. But when we dig, we stumble on the first rocks in our gardens. We clear the ground, we dig, we plant and we adjust our dreams as we go. But, by September we find ourselves again ruefully surveying the results. Jesus has such failures in mind when he tells this parable. Never mind, he seems to say, the harvest comes, in rich abundance.

No doubt Jesus also had in mind the frustrations and failures of Israel when he told this story. We who hear the story today can add the frustrations and failures of almost 2,000 years of Church history. Wars fought in the name of Christianity, the persecution of our Jewish brothers and sisters, and a division between rich and poor even more profound than in the time of Jesus—are these not enough to make us lose heart? Can the kingdom really come to redeem such failures?

We think of our own frustrations and failures, too. Can the kingdom really come to us?

Never mind, says Jesus. Never mind the sins. Never mind the frustrations and failures. Look—the seed is planted. God's word, God's unfailing word, is spoken.

Here the kingdom comes, in rich abundance.



Food for Thought

- ❖ What control do we have over the garden of our lives?



Food for Thought

- ❖ How can we gain understanding? develop the ability to endure? prevail over the cares of this world?

Bridges for Tridgers

Recipe for Awareness

Begin with a moment of centering silence and quiet reflection, setting aside the concerns and agenda of the day.

1 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our family.

"Dear God, who is present with our family now, and at all times and in all ways..."

Continue with:

2 We express our gratitude for today's gifts from God.

"Today I give thanks for..." or, "Today, I am grateful for..."

Pause again for another moment of centering silence and quiet reflection.

3 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our own experience.

Silently contemplate the question: "When have I acted from love?"

Silently contemplate the question: "When have I acted from fear?"

Based on your contemplation, create your intention to move forward as an expression of God's Love.

4 We plan and move forward with God.

"God, help me to manifest your presence today by..."

Invitations to Community

- In Romans 8:1-11, Paul praises the freedom that comes with life lived according to the Spirit. Who in our community of faith longs to hear the good news of this freedom? Pray to God that all those who feel trapped by their human weaknesses may experience the holy freedom given through God's Spirit.
- In today's gospel, Jesus proclaims the abundant harvest of God's kingdom. Who has planted the seeds of this kingdom in our community today? in our nation? in our world? Praise God for those who have faithfully planted the seeds that God will bring to rich harvest.

Suggestions for Families

Try out the situations in Matthew 13:1-9. Buy a package of radish seeds and try sowing them in hard-packed dirt, in a thin layer of earth covering rock, in weed-filled soil and in well-prepared garden soil. What happens to each set of seeds? Can any of them produce good-tasting radishes? (You will need plenty of water and patience for this activity! Expect to harvest radishes about a month after planting.)

Share an episode of failure, or shortcoming—a time when what you have sown seems not to have come to fruition. It may be that the situation looks different from the outside, and that the abundant harvest is there, just beyond your awareness. Both ask for and offer a perspective on a supposed failure that may help frame it in a new light.

Prayer Starter

God, plant your never-failing word deeply in my heart...

