

May I speak in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus sits by the Sea of Galilee and tells a story that, on the surface, makes very little sense. It is a story about a farmer—about a sower—who scatters seed with what looks like astonishing carelessness.

As any gardener here knows, you don't throw precious seed onto a hard footpath. You don't toss it into a patch of sharp rocks. You don't deliberately drop it into a thicket of thorns. Seed is expensive. Seed is valuable. Seed is meant to be placed carefully into good, prepared soil.

But Jesus tells us of a sower who seems almost reckless. He flings the seed everywhere. He doesn't appear to mind where it lands. He doesn't seem worried about waste. And this is the first surprise of the parable: **our God is an extravagant sower.**

The seed—the life-giving Word of God—is not rationed. It is not reserved only for the worthy, or the ready, or the receptive. It is scattered far and wide, lavishly, generously, indiscriminately. God's Word is poured out over the whole world, over every heart, over every life, even the places we might think are too hard, too shallow, too thorny, too broken.

And centuries before Jesus told this parable, the prophet Isaiah gave us the theology behind this overflowing abundance.

In Isaiah 55, God declares:

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty.”

Rain does not choose where it falls. Snow does not pick only the fertile fields. They fall everywhere—and wherever they fall, something changes. Something grows. Something is softened. Something is nourished.

Isaiah and Jesus together reveal three truths about the Word of God—truths that speak directly into our lives today.

1. The Power of the Word

Isaiah compares God's Word to rain and snow—forces that cannot be stopped, cannot be contained, and cannot be reversed. Once the rain falls, the earth is changed. Once the snow melts, the soil is fed. Once God speaks, something begins.

God's Word is not fragile. It is not easily defeated. It does not depend on perfect conditions. It is creative, life-giving, and purposeful. And Isaiah tells us that it will accomplish what God desires. It will bear fruit. It will bring life. It will not return empty.

Even when we feel dry, or distracted, or distant, God's Word is still working—quietly, patiently, persistently.

2. The Condition of the Soil

Jesus then turns our attention to the soil—the different conditions of the human heart.

He speaks of:

- **The Path** — hard, compacted, worn down by life. The seed cannot penetrate, and the message is lost.
- **The Rocky Ground** — shallow, quick to sprout but unable to endure difficulty. Faith withers when the sun grows hot.
- **The Thorns** — hearts overwhelmed by worry, anxiety, and the relentless demands of the world. The seed is choked before it can flourish.
- **The Good Soil** — open, receptive, ready to receive and nurture the Word, producing an abundant harvest.

If we're honest, most of us recognise all four soils within ourselves. Our hearts shift. Some days we are open and receptive. Other days we are hardened by disappointment, or overwhelmed by fear, or simply too busy to notice God's gentle voice.

But here is the grace in the parable: **the Sower never gives up.** He keeps scattering. He keeps speaking. He keeps offering the seed of life, even to the places in us that feel barren or resistant.

God does not wait for perfect soil. God works to transform the soil.

3. A Vision of Joy and Transformation

Isaiah ends with a breathtaking vision—a picture of what happens when God's Word takes root.

He speaks of creation bursting into song. Mountains and hills breaking into praise. Trees clapping their hands. And then this beautiful promise: the thorns of life will be replaced by cypresses; the briers will give way to myrtles.

In other words, God's Word does not simply inform us—it transforms us.

The hard places become softened. The rocky places become deepened. The thorny places become cleared. The barren places become fruitful.

God's Word turns our personal wilderness into a garden of praise.

So What About Us?

This parable invites us to ask a gentle but important question: **What kind of soil is my heart today?**

Not in a way that condemns, but in a way that opens us to grace.

Are there places in me that have become hardened—through hurt, disappointment, or habit? Are there shallow places—

where faith is enthusiastic but fragile? Are there thorny places—where anxiety, distraction, or busyness choke the life God is trying to grow? Are there places of good soil—where God’s Word is already bearing fruit?

Wherever we find ourselves, the Sower is already at work. Already scattering. Already speaking. Already nourishing. Already transforming.

Our task is simply to open ourselves—to let the rain fall, to let the seed land, to let God do what God does best: bring life.

A Prayer

Extravagant Sower, soften our hearts to be good soil, that Your Word may take root and produce a harvest of joy and peace. Amen.