

Some seed fell into rich soil and produced its crop – the words of our psalm response; but these words are not from the psalms, as the response usually is; they are from the gospel, the parable of the sower. Some seed fell into rich soil – why only some seed? Surely the sensible sower would make sure that all his seed falls into rich soil?

What a waste! In the parable, only a quarter of the seed has a really good chance of producing its crop. You have heard of the parable of the prodigal Son, who wastes all his father's money, who squanders his inheritance? Well this has been called the parable of the prodigal sower – lots of the seed is wasted; seed is precious, expensive, and he throws it everywhere – so why does Jesus tell this parable? His hearers would have thought – well that is just daft, no-one would do that. Which is why Jesus himself, goes on to explain the parable to the disciples.

The seed, he says, is God's word, which is not just offered to those who are most likely to accept it, and bear fruit, but to everyone, even to those who have little chance of bearing fruit.

And so we in the church must do the same; we must try and proclaim the word of God to everyone, even those for whom the soil of their hearts is rocky or full of weeds and thorns. But there is also a warning in the gospel –

Jesus says that some who will not respond to God's word, and he quotes the prophet Isaiah:

“You will listen and not understand, see and not perceive, for the heart of this nation has grown coarse, their ears are dull of hearing, they have shut their eyes.”

He is talking about the people who hear his word, but it falls on deaf ears; for what might happen if they listen? They might see and understand, and be converted and healed.

Jesus is saying here that some people are afraid of hearing the truth. Even if deep down they know the truth when they hear it, they don't want it to change their lives – for that is what the word does, it changes us, it makes demands on us, and some people in Jesus' day didn't want that – the religious leaders are an example. Other people rejected his message for different reasons – riches and wealth were a common one, preoccupation with their own lives and concerns was another one. No wonder Jesus sometimes felt the need to make hard and challenging statements.

We may think that those words of the prophet Isaiah, repeated by Jesus in the gospel accurately sum up the

prevailing attitude of our society today, in regard to the faith. And yes, the response people make to God's word is disappointing sometimes – but that is the world we live in.

However, we must try not to get too despondent – something I admit happens to me, I'm only human, I take it really personally when people won't come to Mass; celebrating the sacraments is what a priest is there for, and people not wanting that grace feels like a personal rejection – but that is not a good attitude; – let us remember the words of the prophet Isaiah in the first reading – just as the rain and the snow always achieve their purpose of watering the earth, so God's word always achieves its purpose – it never returns to him without succeeding in what it was sent to do.

This means our preaching of the message of Christ cannot possibly fail, it will always have the effect God intends it to have. We may not see the results of it, but we can trust God, because of his great plan of love for the human race, he has it all in hand, he sees the big picture.

So that should encourage us to carry on proclaiming the word, and spreading God's message of salvation here on earth – we just have to remain faithful to this task, as

members of the Church. It is what we are here for. It is why we have a church, and a school next door. So we must be positive and not allow people's lack of response to put us off or get us down.

Our small acts of love and care, an openness about our faith and a willingness to talk about it will all bear fruit in some way. God's Word always achieves the purpose he intended. We're partners with God in sowing the seed of that word in the field of his world. So let's be prodigal in our sowing, and let's look out for every possible opportunity to spread God's message this coming week.