



A grain of wheat: *Parables of hope within the rhythms of creation*

Reading a parable:

Whilst not all these passages listed below are parables in the strict sense of the word, they have something of that quality: stories or visual pictures that allow our imagination to flow as we open ourselves to God. It is rare that a parable is precisely interpreted in the Gospels. Sometimes the meaning of the parable is suggested; often meaning is left undefined for us to wrestle with.

Rather than define truth in a statement, parables invite us to explore what is true with open mind and heart. Rather than require us to obey or conform, parables invite us to respond.

The seed that becomes a tree where the birds of the air take shelter [Mark 4. 30-32]

Some seed fell on good soil... [Mark 4. 1-9]

The seed that grows by night and by day [Mark 4. 26-29]

The cut down tree that bears a fresh shoot [Isaiah 11. 1]

The rain and snow water the earth [Isaiah 55. 10-11]

The wasteland rejoices and blooms [Isaiah 35]

The grain of wheat that in dying yields a rich harvest [John 12. 24-25]

Spring beckons us to new life [Song of Solomon 2. 8-14]

Those who sow with tears will reap with joy [Psalm 126. 4-6]

Mary Magdalene meets Jesus the gardener [John 20. 11-18]



A method for praying parables:

- I ask God for what I desire – for example that I be open to the Spirit's leading and have the willingness to respond.
- I remember that hearing, perceiving and understanding are all God's gift to me.
- I hear the parable – I read it through pondering on its meaning for me, attending to those parts of the story that seem to meet me in the place where I am today
- I look at the parable – I visualise the scene described, asking God to guide my seeing
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- I seek to understand the meaning of the parable for me, asking God to guide my reflection
- When I am ready I turn to God, expressing the prayer that arises from my heart
- I rest quietly in the presence of God, open to receive what I need at this moment for my wholeness.

Acting in hope

Hope is an action more than a feeling. We recognize that we are invited to co-operate with what God desires to bring into being.

Ask God to show you an action you can take as an expression of hope, whether this in relation to your own circumstances, someone you care for, or the neighbourhood or church you are part of.

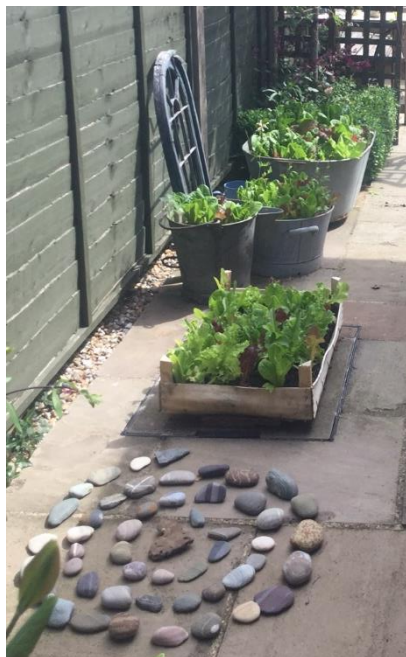
Planting a seed

Imagine God has given you two seeds of hope.

One is to plant in a barren area of your own life.

One is to plant in a barren area of the life of your church, local community or wider society.

In prayer hold each seed in your hand, asking God to help you identify where this seed is most needed, how you will plant it, and what care it will need.



It is not too late to sow seeds for your garden, back yard or windowsill. Most varieties of rocket and lettuce will be happy in a container. Sow the seeds thinly on the surface of the soil, rake them in so they are lightly covered and gently water them in [don't be too vigorous, or all the seed will wash away to one corner of your container]. They should germinate quickly. Keep them watered and you should have a supply of salad for late summer and early autumn.



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In a fallow season

Hope involves both working and waiting. There are seasons when no moment of wanting or labour can bring about the change we seek. We do not abandon our hope. Instead we let it rest with God, and ask to be alive to anything that belongs to us to do to cooperate with the work of the Spirit. We let go our particular vision of how things should change and ask for openness for God's vision.

The fallow season goes on – and then the day comes when a new shoot breaks through the surface of the soil, or a bud that has been tightly closed begins to unfurl.