



CHRIST CHURCH OF ARLINGTON
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Support for Foreign and Local Missions

Why share the good news of Jesus Christ? Why receive the good news of Jesus Christ? The answer lies in profound joy – and profound need.

Most, if not all, religions in the world recognize that life is a struggle. From a Biblical worldview, this struggle is rooted in sin and its perversion of the human heart and God's created order. Generation upon generation, in our individual relations as well as our communal relations, mankind, as a slave to sin, has repeatedly reaped what it has sown.

While mankind can indeed tinker at the margins of creation to remedy some harms wrought by it, only God (in God's time) can redeem creation to its pristine fullness. While individuals can also toil at the margins of their hearts in an effort to be "better" persons in the eyes of themselves and the world, only God (consistent with God's character and power) is capable of forgiving sins against His Holy Being and bringing cleansing spiritual change that, over time, noticeably transforms human lives: blessing God, self, and others.

Regardless of culture, people all over the world continue to react to the Word of God just as they did in Jesus' day. The human heart has not changed fundamentally – nor the forces and impulses acting on it. From Jesus, we hear the following "Parable of the Sower" and its meaning (Mark 4: 3-8, 14-20).

Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain.

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.

The farmer [explains Jesus] sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown; as soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries [or cares] of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it and produce a crop - thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was sown.

To those who hear and understand this parable, as well as other clear teachings in scripture, there is a divine warning and a divine call: do not let doubts, trials, or ungodly desires fill the heart, causing one to spurn the sweet love of God for a lamentable death in sin (John 8: 23-24). Instead, sow the *Lord Jesus* deep inside - the Word of God made flesh (John 1: 1-18) - and experience abundant fruit and eternal goodness available only through Him. To accept, live and love Jesus genuinely by faith is to know a life of meaning and peace in all circumstances, easy and hard. Such faith also brings joyful assurance of eternal life with God (John 3: 16).

Throughout history, some people have recognized Jesus Christ as only a great teacher or prophet, a moral "giant" of his times. However, this reading of Jesus reflects a non-critical analysis of Jesus' claims. Great moral teachers are valued both for their unusual insight and candid truth-telling, and Jesus' statements plainly extend beyond morality. In all frankness, if Jesus is viewed as sane, he was either the greatest moral authority by virtue of his divinity or a deeply reprehensible moral authority for falsely claiming divinity. Jesus did not leave his generation - or any future generation - with a charitable middle position aimed at mere "general respect." Others who recognize the creator of the universe as inherently inaccessible or wholly fictitious are inclined to view Jesus as misunderstood or delusional. However, Christians neither doubt the accessibility of God as Heavenly Father (Matthew 6: 9-14), nor note anything remotely delusional underlying Jesus' clear self-understanding of himself as eternal Son of God "one" with the Father (John 10: 30). Worldwide, Christians continue joyfully to acknowledge Jesus as God incarnate who came into the world to reconcile God and man by executing righteous judgment on Himself to cover, in love, every sin and manifestation of sin, separating Holy God from unholy man (John 3).

Prior to his crucifixion and burial, Jesus alluded to his saving power and purpose, but his disciples and others, within the context of their ordinary experience, struggled to understand how this extraordinary power and grace might unfold in human history. While they listened to Jesus and heard all he said, no one grasped the full ramifications of his words. Jesus, however, was unequivocal:

Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep...; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture... I came so they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father (John 10: 7, 9-11, 16-18).

Later, as Jesus lay suffering on the cross and cruel insults were hurled at him - "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one" (Luke 23: 35) - Jesus asked that his imminent death not be held against those who might otherwise be considered responsible for it. With a love, understanding, and focus foreign to human experience, and life draining from him, Jesus stated prayerfully in his pain: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34).

After Jesus died physically on the cross, his disciples were both scared for their future (would unjust punishment eventually extend to them, too?) and saddened by their personal loss. The good shepherd they had intimately known and loved was now dead! Their sadness, however, turned to shocking incredulous joy when they and others witnessed the risen Christ in a variety of contexts over a 40-day period (Acts 1: 3). At one point, reappearing before his disciples with wounds still evident and opening their minds to the scriptures, Jesus explained anew how his purpose was to "suffer and on the third day rise from the dead," and how, consistent with God's eternal will, "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached *in his name to all nations* beginning in Jerusalem" (Luke 24: 45-47).

With the knowledge that in Jesus Christ lies the fullness of truth, love, grace, and power, and that God is pleased and glorified by acceptance of His Son as Savior and Lord, Christians around the world believe, in obedience to Christ, that every man, woman, and child should have the opportunity to enter

into an intimate relationship with Jesus. Although some alive today, through coercive mechanisms and measures, may seek to foreclose such opportunities, and others, through hostility or indifference, may remain firmly closed to such opportunities, this decision ultimately belongs to God and those whom God touches as a matter of heart and conscience.

It is for these reasons that Christ Church of Arlington, in an atmosphere of no pressure (for Jesus calls ALL to do unto others as all would want others to do unto them, Luke 6: 31) and in partnership with Mission to the World, Campus Crusade for Christ, Good News Jail and Prison Ministries, Youth With A Mission, MMinistries, Wycliffe Bible Translators and other loving outreach organizations, is genuinely excited to share the good news of Jesus Christ, in word and deed, in all corners of this troubled world. In Christ, God brings unexpected good out of the most tragic of circumstances and extends limitless grace in the face of apparently intractable situations. In Christ, peace overcomes sadness, love finds its full expression, the poor and marginalized are lifted up, and the oppressed find new freedom. With grateful hearts, we thank God for the gift of his infinitely precious Son, and in Jesus' name, we will continue to partner with others to ensure all have the opportunity to hear and receive, in their own language, the good news of this unparalleled gift of love.