

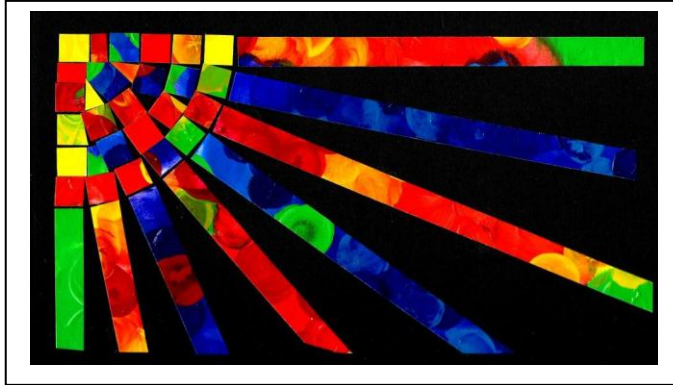
Making Space for God

Lessons From Mark #6—Parable of the Sower

Opening Prayer

Too late I have loved you, O my Beautiful God, ancient yet ever new! Too late have I loved you! And behold, you were already inside me but I was out and about searching for you elsewhere. I was looking for you amid the lovely things you have made. You were with me the whole time but I was not with you.

From Augustine's Confessions
(paraphrase)



Arrival

Take some times to settle yourself. Invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been in the last four weeks. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? When have you experienced the Lord's presence? Journal your thoughts and offer these to the Lord.

Scripture—Mark 4:1-20

In the course of twenty-four hours, I can be all four soils types depicted by Jesus in the Parable of the Sower—uncaring and distant, non committal, distracted, and sometimes receptive. Read the passage again and reflect on how the words of Jesus speak to you today. Journal your response.

Reading for Reflection

In his lifetime, Vincent Van Gogh painted the image of the sower thirty times. Take some time to read the accompanying essay about his engagement with the parable.

If you want to grow in your relationship with God, there are three things you must not do. You must not pretend. Always tell the truth to others and yourself. Secondly, you must not presume that people should treat you a certain way. Thirdly, you must not push. Be willing to take your stand for what is right and for God but resist pushing you agenda or ideas upon another. Let God do the pushing.

Dallas Willard at the Wheaton Theology Conference

Augustine said that you have to start your relationship with God all over from the beginning, every day. Yesterday's faith does not wait for you like a dog with your slippers and the morning paper in its mouth. You seek it, and in seeking it, you find it. During the Renaissance Fra Giovanni Giocondo wrote:

No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take heaven!

No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant. Take peace!

Anne Lamott in Plan B, Further Thoughts on Faith, page 258

I have always wanted to be liked or admired. I feel a terrible insecurity if a man turns on me, if I lose a friend. I don't even want to lose a husband. I want everything, all the time, everywhere. I'm afraid of the desert. God loves you, they say in the churches; God is everything. People who believe that don't need admiration, they don't need to sleep with a man, they feel safe. But I can't invent a belief.

Dialogue in the novel End of the Affair by Graham Greene

The more I dig deeply into the dark regions of my own heart and into the hidden depths of others, the more I'm persuaded of two convictions: (1) something is terribly wrong in our hearts that only passionate relational truth from God as delivered in the Bible can expose as lethal and dislodge as controlling; (2) something is alive with transformational power in the exact center of God's people that can only be liberated by hearing counter intuitive truth from God as delivered in His Word and revealed through His Spirit.

Larry Crabb in Conversations 8.1 page 41

For Fun—Parable of the Tailor a Guy Who Sews

One day a tailor named James went to his shop to sew. He gathered his needles and thread and laid them on the table. He then selected four pieces of cloth.

The first was a piece of thick black leather used in making jackets for bad-ass bikers who rode Harley Davidson motorcycles and screamed neo-Nazi slogans while roaring down the street. The needle broke in the tailor's hand when he tried to stick it into the cloth. It was too hard.

The second piece of cloth was made of finely woven silk. The needle and thread passed through the cloth easily. But the silk was so thin that when the fibers got hot, they melted into a puddle of delusion. The only customers who bought the cloth were under-employed Hollywood starlets who thought they might benefit from a wardrobe malfunction when paparazzi flash bulbs started popping.

The third piece of cloth was a blend of fibers from the coffee bean and poison ivy plants. The needle and thread easily bound the fabric together. But after an hour, the customer would break out in a fit of hyperactive itching constantly checking their cell phones while scratching their armpits.

The fourth piece of cloth was made from one-thousand-thread-count Egyptian cotton. Needle and thread stitching seemed almost invisible. The tailor made a lovely cap that he wore to cover his bald head while singing songs in Central Park to nostalgic baby boomers worried about losing their social security benefits.

Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear! ¹

Benediction

Soften the soil of our hearts, O Lord. Help us to hear your voice each day. Speak to us from your Word, our friends, our enemies, and our dreams. Help us to follow you faithfully as you faithfully love us. Amen

¹Parable of the Sewer by Steven Stuckey 2017

²Sunshine, Acrylic Collage on Form Board, 6.5 x 11 inches, Steven Stuckey 2017