

So what kind of dirt are you? We've all just heard the savior of the world in a parable, compare each of us to dirt – flattering, isn't it?

Probably not the best way to impress someone, comparing them to dirt – but something we should be used to – because at the beginning of each Lent, when our foreheads are smeared with ashes in the shape of a cross – we are told to remember that we are dust and unto dust we shall return. . .

For the next two weeks, and then 7 more times before the beginning of Advent – Jesus is going to tell us stories, parables, about the kingdom of heaven – and how those caught up in the values of the kingdom should act.

Jesus always tries to use everyday images that his hearers could relate to when telling these stories – and I think this is a good one to begin with – in that haven't we all tried to grow something, sometime in our life?

Even if we have to go all the way back to grade school when we were growing bean seeds in a plastic cup – all of us have tried to grow something – and we know soil is something we need and it's a big issue when it comes to our success or failure.

Jesus uses the parable today to tell us two things: first that his message of love and forgiveness and mercy is for all different types of people in different stages of their lives, and second – that regardless of where God's word falls – it will produce some kind of growth. . .

Now I have to admit – whenever I hear this parable, and possibly when you hear it – I immediately think: well of course I'm the rich soil on which the seed – that is the word of God – fell upon. After all, look what I do for God's sake – preach the word Sunday after Sunday after Sunday. Certainly the seed has taken root in me.

But then, I need to be honest with myself, and admit that yes, at times, my heart, and mind, and life may be the rich soil upon which the word of God falls ---- but don't I have some of those other soil types in me, too??

Certainly there are times when I hear the word of God – or at the very least, particular words of God like:

Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you – when I know that word is simply falling on the hard ground of the path – it doesn't stand a chance of taking root.

And there are times, because of my gardening experience when I know if you want to have good soil – that doesn't just happen – that you have to constantly be working on improving the soil to have good produce --- that I simply become lazy – and allow my heart and life to become rocky – or allow my worries and fears and concerns to choke the life out of the word of God trying to take root, much like the seed that fell among the thorns.

So, just some things to think about: -What can crowd Jesus out of your life – and keep your heart from being fertile soil for the word of God to take root?

-How can you do better at preparing your heart – to be more receptive to the seed of God's word when it comes to you?

-What are the rocks and thorns, the cares and concerns – that are currently chocking off the word and grace of God – so that it cannot take root in your heart? And how about just turning all those things over to the Lord – inviting him to be with you in those cares and concerns?

-What do you have to do – to have rich soil and all the nourishment you need – so that you produce fruit – a hundred or sixty or thirty fold?

Yes, Lord, we are all dust – dirt and rocks and thorns. Help us to know it is only with your help that our hearts, and minds, and lives, can consistently be rich soil in which your word can take root. AMEN!