

## Reflection for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

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Rev. Rob McUtchen

### Matthew 13.1-9, Parable of the Sower

My first job after graduating in economics from university was with the former Victorian Railways. Economics is described as the study of scarcity. I was the economist in the office and my job was assessing whether works programmes would justify the money to be spent on them – were they value for money?

It is more than 40 years since I last worked in economics, but old habits die hard. When I read the Parable of the Sower the little bit of economist that remains embedded in my DNA screamed out – NOOOO – this is wasteful, inefficient, ridiculous! There are several strands of meaning in this parable, but a major one concerns the spendthrift, extravagantly generous nature of God which Jesus reveals.

Just to remind you, dear reader, in biblical times crops were sown by hand – the seed scattered by the handful. Seed for the next planting was expensive, not to be wasted. Yet this sower casts so much – perhaps three of every four handfuls (75%!!!) - into places it will not grow. He shows little care as he strides the field, flinging handfuls of seed in all directions – the pathway, the thorns, the rocky ground, **and** the deep rich soil in which the seed will sprout and grow strong and bountiful. The sower would be criticised by economists for not taking care to get the maximum harvest from every grain of wheat – and this point would not have been lost on his farming listeners.

The point? God is neither sparing nor economical with his love and grace, which like the sower, he broadcasts widely. Some “ground” where it falls may not yield a harvest – maybe God is also the optimist; but love and grace are extended without condition to all manner of people, in the hope that they will take root, become bountiful, and enrich the world.

A reminder of God’s extravagant love and care is timely as we enter another Stage 3 isolation. Some find isolation to be an ordeal. We live with the ever-present fear that today’s runny nose or sneeze could be the virus tomorrow. Loneliness and boredom can become issues, as can the questioning of where God is in the midst of isolation. It is good to remember we are Jesus’ people, and party to what St Paul spoke of in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8 – that nothing in all creation shall separate us from the love of God. St Paul, writing to the Romans in today’s text, concludes saying,

*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.*

If God can do this in Jesus’ resurrection, what have we to fear in the present? Remembering who we are, a people loved by a generous and extravagant God, can be a secure point of reference as we manage the challenges of another period of isolation.

Grace and Peace be with you.

*Robert*