**Life Group Notes – Sunday 20th October 2024**

**The Parable of the Sower**

**Mark 4:1-20**

1. What is a parable? What forms can it take? What is the purpose of telling a parable?

*A parable essentially makes an illuminating comparison – between a normal, daily experience that people understand and a spiritual truth they have not yet understood.*

1. What has happened so far in Mark’s gospel that sets the background to the parable of the sower? What questions might this experience have raised in the minds of the disciples?

*Jesus has performed great miracles and drawn huge crowds (e.g. 3:10, 4:1) but is facing serious opposition from religious and political leaders and even from his own family (e.g. 2:6, 3:6, 3:21-22). How can he be such a divisive figure? The parables have not yet explained to the disciples why there is such conflict.*

1. There are four types of soil or people described in the parable, three of which result in failure and one in a very productive harvest. Do you think the overall tone of the parable is then one of disappointment or one of hope and expectation?

*What note does the parable end on?*

1. Jesus was clearly reaching out in love to many people, but he recognised that many would not understand the message and turn to God (4:11-12) – just as happened with the Old Testament prophets. How do we understand this mystery that God does not compel acceptance of his word?

*No simple answer! But a consequence is that we have to be careful to be not only hearers of the word but to take it to heart and act upon it.*

1. Can we relate in our own Christian experience to the first three examples? Have we failed to hear the word, given up when problems arose, or been diverted by various worries and desires? Does the parable provide any answers for overcoming these situations?

*Note that while the ground varies the seed remains the same in each case. What difference might it make to focus on the fact that all who hear are given the seed of the word of God?*

1. How do you imagine a believer who produces thirty, sixty or a hundred fold? What might that look like? Is it a realistic expectation? Do we take it as a hopeful encouragement or an unachievable goal?

*Why did Jesus set that level of expectation?*