

## **Activities for Juniors.**

- **You can learn more about how Jesus preaches to the people.**

Today's story is one of the most well-known of the parables Jesus told. Parables are stories that convey (tell) a message to the listener. Jesus uses parables to tell people about his message of God's love for them. The stories are based on things his listeners will understand. Parables help people relate Jesus' preaching to their everyday lives.

Jesus has been preaching for a while and his reputation is growing; more and more people have heard about him. Now large crowds are gathering to hear him. Jesus tells the crowd the parable of the farmer who sows seed in a field. You can read the whole story below.

What is strange in this story is that Jesus does not expect the people to understand the meaning of the parable. Later on the disciples ask Jesus why he speaks to the people using parables. Jesus explains that although crowds have come to listen to him, they are not ready to hear and understand his message. Jesus tells the disciples that they have been specially chosen to understand Jesus' teachings. They will carry on the work of preaching to the people. Only gradually will other people be able to really listen and then come to understand the message of God's love.

Later Jesus explains the meaning of the parable to the disciples. You can about read that in the story too.

- **You can read the story as it is told in Matthew.**

Later that same day, Jesus left the house and went down to the shore where an immense crowd soon gathered. So that everybody could hear him, He got into a boat and taught from it while the people listened on the beach. He told many stories to preach to the people. This is one of them:

"A farmer was sowing seeds in his fields. As he scattered the seed across the ground, some fell beside a path, and the birds came and ate it. And some fell on rocky soil where the earth was thin and not very deep; the plants sprang up quickly enough in the shallow soil, but the hot sun soon scorched them and they withered and died, for they had so little root. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns choked out the tender shoots. But some fell on good soil and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as he had planted. If you have ears, listen!"

Later Jesus spoke to His disciples, "Now here is the explanation of the story I told about the farmer planting grain: The hard path where some of the seeds fell represents the heart of a person who hears the Good News about the Kingdom of God and doesn't understand it; then bad thoughts snatch away the seeds from their heart. The shallow,

rocky soil represents the heart of a person who hears the message and receives it with real joy, but they don't have much depth in their lives, and the seeds don't root very deeply, and after a while when trouble comes, or they are treated badly because of their beliefs, their enthusiasm fades, and they drop out. The ground covered with thistles represents someone who hears the message, but the cares and difficulties of their lives and their longing for money choke out God's Word, and they do less and less for God. The good ground represents the heart of a person who listens to the message and understands it and goes out and brings thirty, sixty, or even a hundred others into God's Kingdom."

- **You can think about the reading**

In the time of Jesus, farmers did not have machines to help them grow their crops. Many people worked on the land, often for another land owner. The work would have been hard and most of it was done by hand. Seeds were sown simply by a person walking through a field and scattering them in a spraying action, a bit like the way you throw a frisbee.



This photograph from 1940 shows men sowing seeds by hand.



This farm labourer is sowing oats in Langdale in Cumbria.

The land in Israel was very fertile and people grew lots of wheat. The wheat would have been used to make bread which was a staple, main food, of the people. Many of the people who came to listen to Jesus would have been used to working in the fields and would know how important a good harvest of grain was. Thirty, sixty and a hundred times as much as was planted were all possible harvests when the seeds grew well.

This is a very well-known parable and many people who have heard the story will also know what each group of seeds represents. However, they may not realise that Jesus only explains the meaning of the parable to the disciples.

This story seems to show that Jesus is continuing to prepare the disciples for their great work of preaching. In the same way Jesus is preparing the people to be able to listen to the message of God's love for them. At the end of the story he challenges the people to take notice of his message when he says "If you have ears, listen!"

Jesus is preparing the way in which the Kingdom of God on Earth will gradually spread and grow throughout the world.

Are we always ready to listen to what we are being told? Sometimes we are not ready to hear a new message, especially if it challenges us. For example, if we are told something

bad about one of our friends, perhaps they have been unkind to someone. We do not want to hear about it because we do not want to change our opinions about our friends. We want to be able to rely on them. It is difficult to hear that they can make mistakes, just like we do sometimes.

We do not want to listen when we are being told of things that we have done wrong, or things that we should have done, but have failed to do. We are embarrassed and feel ashamed.

Sometimes we miss out because we do not listen when there is good news to hear, or interesting new things to learn. Are you always listening carefully to your teachers at school? Do you always listen carefully to your Mum or Dad or Auntie when they are speaking to you? Our story today shows that Jesus understands that we can get distracted. Our lives are full of complexity, all sorts of different things, and we need to be ready to hear his message. Sometimes we may need to hear it again and again before we are ready to really listen and understand.

- **You can watch an animation of the parable.**

If you click on the link below you can watch an animation of the parable of the farmer. It includes pictures showing the meaning of the parable. There are very few words in the film so see if you can work out how the parable story fits with the pictures.

Here is the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJvzmBn5NcAln>

The film is shown on YouTube so please make sure you have permission to watch it and have an adult with you. The film lasts about 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> minutes.

- **You can do some puzzles based on the story.**

The answers to the first puzzle are at the bottom of the maze....



Jesus explains what the parable means. When we understand the story, we can see where we fit in it.

**BIBLE WORDS**

**parable:** A story that teaches.

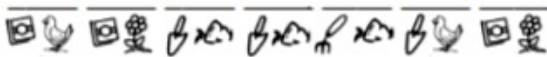
**sower:** A person who plants seeds.

Use the graph to fill in the blanks.

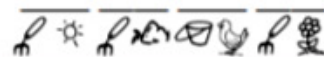
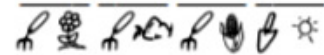
Example: B =  

	G	O	S	I	D
	L	H	A	R	P
	T	C	K	Y	N
	M	E	G	B	U
					

The seed is



People who don't understand the Word of God are like the



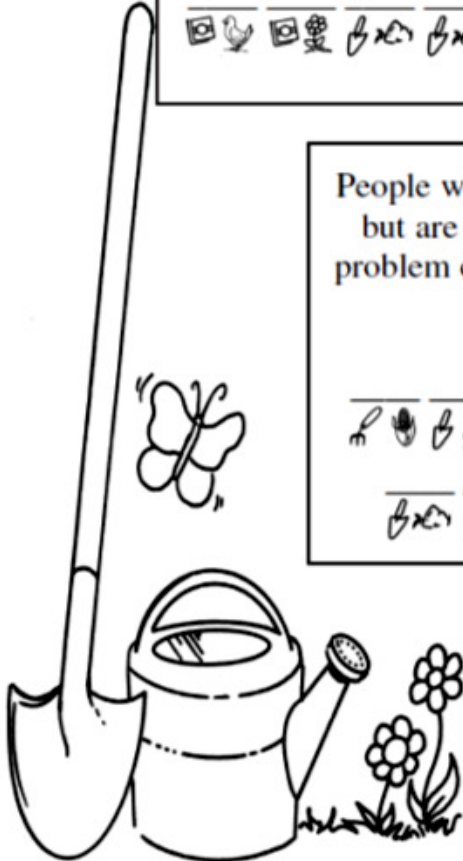
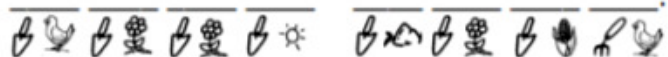
People who hear God's Word but are only happy until a problem comes along are like the



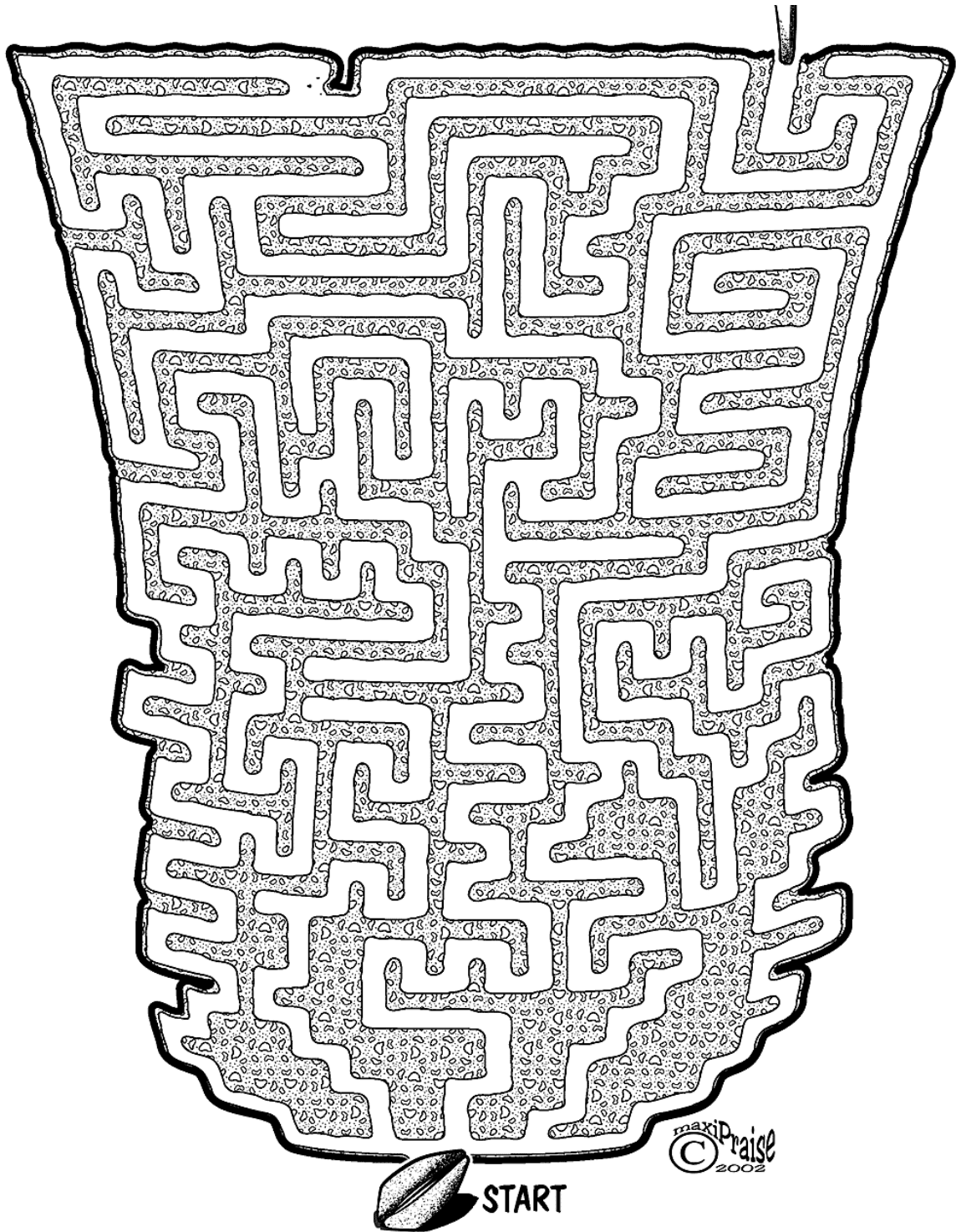
People who hear God's Word but care more about wealth and worldly things are like the seedlings in the



People who hear God's Word, spread it to others and keep it always are like the



Can you guide the seed that fell on good ground up through the soil to the surface?



(Answers to coded puzzle: GOD'S MESSAGE, HARD PATH, ROCKY SOIL, THORNS, GOOD SOIL)

- You can colour a picture of the Sower.

*The Parable of the Sower*

