

Reflection for the Fourteenth Sunday of the Church's Year

In the gospel that we will hear next weekend Jesus likens himself to a Sower who goes out to sow seed. Famously, some seed fell on the paths and were eaten by the birds. Other seed fell on rocky ground and had no depth of soil. Other seed fell among thorns which choked them. Even the seed which fell into good soil bore differing amounts of grain, *“some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*¹

The remarks Jesus makes in today's gospel as well as this parable are rooted in his recent experience when visiting a number of places where his words and miracles have fallen on very rocky ground. Jesus singles out Chorazin, Bethsaida and the larger city of Capernaum as places which are not receptive to his message. In today's gospel, and next weekend's parable of the Sower, he reflects on why the people of these places are not receptive and declares, *“I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.”* They are not receptive because they think they are cleverer than Jesus, or they are not convinced by his message, or not even impressed by his miracles. They do not have a child-like openness to the gospel, nor do they have an open heart and mind to come to know the Father. Rather, it is those *“who labour and are heavy burdened”* who are open to receive Jesus into their lives, and he invites them *“to come to me”* that they *“may find rest for their souls.”*

In order to be receptive to the message of Jesus we must like him *“be gentle and lowly in heart.”* We must take his *“yoke upon us”* which is described as *“easy”* and shoulder his *“burden”* which *“is light.”* The people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum appear to have been unable to do this and choose instead to follow the designs of their own hearts and minds.

St Paul in our second reading describes this in another way. *“You are not”*, he says, *“in the flesh but in the Spirit.”* We must not embrace, earthly, worldly outlooks and attitudes, reasoning and logic, but we are to live *“in the Spirit”*, that is, we must *“take his yoke upon us and learn from him”*, bringing our needs and burdens to Jesus

¹ Matt 13: 8