

## 'A' List Christians!

[Isaiah 55<sup>10-13</sup>; Psalm 65] Romans 8<sup>1-11</sup>; Matthew 13<sup>1-9,28-23</sup>

*A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path; other seeds fell on rocky ground; other seeds fell among thorns; other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain. [Matthew 13<sup>3-9</sup>]*

In the family business we had our first meeting with a Business Coach. It was a shock to us when he said that one of the preconditions of taking us on was that we put all our prices up 5% with immediate effect. Then he got us to list our customers in 4 categories, A-D. A were the excellent, regular customers and they needed to become VIP's and know they were looked after; B were the good customers; C and D were either infrequent and unreliable – they should be ignored!

It is as if Jesus categorises the embryonic plants, the embryonic disciples, A-D, but here only the A category matters.

Interestingly, in the popular speak this parable is called the parable of the sower (even Jesus calls it that), but that isn't quite right. The sower completes the task and the seed is sown – it isn't the parable of the sower. Neither is the parable about the seed – it does its job and germinates and attempts to flourish and does what it should – it isn't the parable of the seed. Nor is it the parable of the plant as they all seem to try. It is the parable of the soil, that's what it makes the difference.

You could look at this text in a hopeless sort of way and become resigned to your fate, especially if soil-wise you are a path, or rocky ground or thorn-infested. But no gardener simply accepts the fact that a soil is what it is: stones are evicted; thorns are removed; paths are redirected so that you end up with the plot you want.

In my love-hate relationship with Paul I am, this week, feeling positive towards him: he tells us that the quality of the soil is directly proportional to how open we are to God working in us through his Holy Spirit. Paul begins his magisterial 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Epistle to the Romans with that great declaration: **there is therefor now no condemnation for those who are in**

**Christ Jesus.** Then he goes on to explain why – we may provide the manure for the plot of land, but God does the bits that matter!

- ✘ First, God makes us his own: The **law of flesh** is dealt with if we are open to the Spirit of God – God sent his **own Son to deal with sin.** That is why **there is no condemnation** – that is why the **Spirit is life because of righteousness**, because (in the true meaning of the word, righteousness) we have been acquitted: no record remains of our sin.
- ✘ Second, we need to live up to it: **you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit.** Paul has already set out the stark choice – **for those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.** We are either **hostile** to God or **submit** to God. But it isn't for us to do, it is only for us to be open to God working in us through his Spirit, that same powerful spirit that **raised Jesus from the dead**, Paul tells us, **dwells in you!**

I suppose the difficulty so many of us face is that we like our life as it is and are fearful of what it might become if we let the Spirit in. Put very simply, the Spirit of God is 'breath' or 'wind' and we are like a tyre. We may be very comfortable where we are in our deflated life, but we are going nowhere, nothing is possible. If we allow the Spirit of God to fill us we become useful for the purpose for which we were created and anything is possible!

A, B, C or D – where are you?