



4 Soils by James B. Janknegt

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James Janknegt is a contemporary American artist, folk-singer and Christian. At times his artwork has been just a spare-time activity as he turned his hand to a range of other jobs in order to earn a living. In his Bible illustrations he brings an unaffected clarity and simplicity, as we see in this painting of the Parable of the Sower (sometimes referred to as “the Four Soils”). His approach makes this parable accessible. Each of the four situations is represented, and by placing the situations of failure around the edge, while leaving the potentially successful sowing in the centre, he emphasises the positive message of this parable.

Other artists may adopt a different approach to their work, leaving subtle clues to challenge the viewer to make the effort to understand their painting’s deeper meaning. Those who try to do so will be rewarded by an enriched experience and, hopefully a clearer understanding of the artist’s work. There is a parallel with what Jesus is doing in this parable.

It is sometimes said the Parable of the Sower is a story about parables. The discussion in verses 10-13 would certainly support this idea. Jesus’ point is that spiritual understanding is not instantly available to all, only to those with open and receptive hearts and minds. Consequently those who listen with closed minds just hear a story, perhaps a good story but one whose underlying meaning would escape them, whereas those with open and enquiring minds will gain insight into a deeper truth. This is the first parable in Matthew’s Gospel: the parable and its explanation set the ground rules for this type of teaching.

Do we bring an open mind as we try to understand God’s purposes, whether revealed in scripture or through our experience of the world around us? Are we ready to make the effort and commitment required of disciples of Jesus? If the answer to both questions is yes the spiritual reward is great:

“Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance”. (Matthew 13:12)

Silence, Prayer, And Communion Ending 9.30 a.m.

Silence

A time for thought...reflection...prayer

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may your words of truth take root in our hearts and grow to rich maturity.

May we hear your will for us and act upon it;
may we take seriously our responsibility to encourage and nurture one another in faith at every age and very stage.

Silence

Eternal truth, living God

Your word is life and strength

Heavenly Father, may every act of selfless giving and every search for truth be richly blessed and rewarded. Disturb our assumptions and lead us to ponder more deeply on the spiritual dimension of our lives. May the word of God reach all who are ready to receive it and let us not set any boundaries here as to who they might be.

Silence

Eternal truth, living God

Your word is life and strength

Heavenly Father, make our homes places of love and growth, welcoming to all who visit them, and accepting and forgiving to all who are nurtured there. Help us through the quarrels and heartaches and remind us to honour one another as your cherished ones.

Silence

Eternal truth, living God

Your word is life and strength

Heavenly Father, may all whose bodies, souls or minds are aching know the strengthening power of your companionship and the healing work of your love. We pray for those we know who are sick, for those who mourn, and for all those who have suffered injury or bereavement as a result acts of terrorism, mindless violence, insurrection or just sheer hatred.

May we be more ready to support and befriend one another through the difficult times, in the name and love of the God we worship.

Silence

Eternal truth, living God

Your word is life and strength

We say together

**Heavenly Father, the rain and the sunshine,
the growing and the harvesting,
sing to us of your faithful love,
and we offer you our thankful praise
for all your gifts to us. Amen**

And

Please stay for the communion even if not taking the bread and wine. You can come forward for a blessing (a brief prayer) – simply carry this sheet.

Communion

A moment to reflect on the times when we have not been loyal to God and His ways and have not cared for others.

In God's holy presence we call to mind our need for forgiveness.

Silence

We say together:

**Father, our sin has brought you sorrow,
has harmed those who share our life,
has been hurtful to ourselves.**

**We dare not say we have only lightly sinned;
Yet Christ has taken to himself the burden of it all.**

In Jesus' name may we be freed from the penalty and power of sin. **Amen.**

God of love and wonder, we sing your praises: with the great company of people, past and present, here and everywhere. We adore you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

You are indeed holy, eternal God and Father;
in love greater than we can imagine you gave your only Son,
that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.
Not as we would, but as we are able, we praise and thank you
for the reality of his birth, the glory of his humanity, the generosity of his life:
for his sacrifice on the cross, the wonder of his resurrection,
and the assurance that he lives for ever to save us; for the gift of the Holy Spirit,
for our calling to be his people, for the hope all can find in him.

We say together:

**Remembering his life and sacrifice
we now come to his table as he has invited us to do.
Send to us now, we pray, the Holy Spirit
so that we may indeed be your people,
and that as we share the bread and wine
we may share in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Amen**

These are the gifts of God
for the people of God.

Please come to the rail now. We suggest you stand to receive communion and keep a suitable distance from fellow communicants.

Ending

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:
**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

A post-communion prayer, said together:

**Lord God,
you feed us with the living bread from heaven;
renew our faith, increase our hope, and strengthen our love.
Teach us to hunger
for Christ who is the true and living bread,
and to live by every word
that comes from your mouth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

The blessing

Hear the teaching of Jesus:
'Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'
Go now to do God's will;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The next S.P.A.C.E. will be on Wednesday 3rd August

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

¹⁰ The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

¹¹ He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables:

*“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

Matthew 13:1-13 (a lectionary reading for today, extended)