

The seed falling on good soil refers to the person who hears the word and understands it: this person bears fruit and yields plentifully.

Jesus had spoken in parables to a large crowd on the shores of Lake Tiberias, and then he turned to his disciples and explained the deeper meaning of all he had said.

The central theme in the story he had told is the word of God which is likened to a small and fragile seed. Stones, thorns and birds may prevent it from sprouting, taking root and producing ripe ears of corn but the wise sower knows of its surprising vitality.

Through these images, Jesus revealed the relationship between humanity and the word that God offers in abundance. Although there are people who welcome the word, there are others who, for various reasons, let it fall to the ground without bearing fruit. In fact, superficiality and materialism sometimes dominate the human heart and threaten the miraculous supernatural life that God would like to kindle within us.

We too, like the disciples, are invited by Jesus to enter into the humble mystery of God's love and, at the same time, are personally called upon to decide what kind of 'soil' we wish to be.

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Listening and understanding seem to be the secret that makes us resemble receptive soil where the seed of the word can express its power and bear good fruit.

Willingness to listen is very precious because, from a spiritual perspective, it creates space for the life of God, whose mercy always precedes us and who has the patience of the sower who knows and respects the time it takes for the seed to ripen.

Chiara Lubich wrote, '*God's words enlighten not only our minds but our entire being from within because they are light, love and life. They bring peace – the peace that Jesus calls his own: "my peace" – even in moments of turmoil and anguish. They offer joy even in the midst of the pain that sometimes grips*

*the soul. They give strength especially when we are dismayed or discouraged. They set us free because they open the way to the Truth... If we wish, we can develop a passionate love for the word of God and welcome it attentively when it is proclaimed in churches or we read, study or meditate upon it... But above all, we are called to live it... By living a single word of Jesus, we live the whole gospel. He reveals his whole being in every word. He comes to live within us... and enlightens our way of thinking, acting and all we desire in all aspects of our lives.'*¹

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Wambil from Mexico tells us: 'There was a time when I felt trapped in a deep hole. I was in an abusive relationship and tried to escape and sort everything out on my own. I was influenced by social media and all the world offered me – and so I often chased after things not guided by God. Despite all my efforts, I felt empty and without a purpose in life. I knew that love is a universal language. When I started volunteering, I found a sense of fulfilment that could only come from God. Over time, I discovered a place where I could listen to his word and grow in my relationship with him. I am deeply grateful.'

Even when we feel like barren, stony ground, it is the word itself that is effective as the prophet Isaiah reveals: 'As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish... so is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' (Is. 55: 10-11).

We are sustained by this hope and in this time dominated by fears and tensions, we can also nurture trust in the women and men with whom we share our lives. By believing in their capacity to bear good fruit and creating opportunities for listening and dialogue, we will walk together towards a better future made by fraternity.

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¹ C. Lubich, *Word of Life*, March 2003.