

**UNIT 3 : Lesson 8**

**AIM:** To understand that the presence of God is with His people in all situations of life's journey

**Theme:** Nature of God



## Journey through the Wilderness

### Exodus 15:22-27 (NRSV)

<sup>22</sup> Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. <sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. That is why it was called Marah. <sup>24</sup> And the people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” <sup>25</sup> He cried out to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he put them to the test.

<sup>26</sup> He said, “If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.”

<sup>27</sup> Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they camped there by the water.

### Exodus 16:1-36 (NRSV)

The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. <sup>5</sup> On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” <sup>6</sup> So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD

who brought you out of the land of Egypt, <sup>7</sup> and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?” <sup>8</sup> And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining

that you utter against him-what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD.”<sup>9</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.’”<sup>10</sup> And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.<sup>11</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses and said,<sup>12</sup> “I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”<sup>13</sup> In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.<sup>14</sup> When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.<sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” [a] For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”<sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.’”<sup>17</sup> The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less.<sup>18</sup> But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed.<sup>19</sup> And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over until morning.”<sup>20</sup> But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them.<sup>21</sup> Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

<sup>22</sup> On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses,<sup>23</sup> he said to them, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.’”<sup>24</sup> So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it.<sup>25</sup> Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field.”<sup>26</sup> Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.”

<sup>27</sup> On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none.<sup>28</sup> The LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions?”<sup>29</sup> See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day.”<sup>30</sup> So the people rested on the seventh day.<sup>31</sup> The house of Israel called it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.<sup>32</sup> Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, in order that they may see the food with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’”<sup>33</sup> And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD, to be kept throughout your generations.”<sup>34</sup> As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the covenant, for safekeeping.<sup>35</sup> The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.<sup>36</sup> An omer is a tenth of an ephah.

## Student Introduction

The first challenge the Israelites faced after leaving Egypt had to do with one of life's basic necessities - water. For three days they didn't find any. Then, when they did, it wasn't fit to drink. You can tell a lot about someone's character by how they first respond to difficulties. What was the Israelites' reaction to the water situation?

They grumbled. Even though they had witnessed God's power and had just experienced a miraculous deliverance from Egyptian slavery, they still grumbled. Though they had put their trust in God, they apparently didn't believe that God would provide what they needed. The relentless rebelliousness of the Israelites in spite of the wonders that the Lord performs for them should make one think, how much is enough? When does one start trusting? In our own lives do we gleefully accept the good fortune and still be questioning or thankless?

## BIBLE EXPLORATION

The Israelites spit out the bitter water at Marah and question Moses. In the first half of chapter 15, we see the people lifting up their voice in praise to the Lord. Now in the second half we see them murmuring disgruntled against Moses. What happened to their hymn of praise, a hymn in which they confessed the Lord's loving kindness and faithfulness (15: 13) and expressed their confidence in the Lord (15: 17)?

Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord asked him to throw a piece of wood to sweeten the bitter water. There at Marah the Lord tested the people. In (15:26), he said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you."

In chapter 16 the whole Israeli community set out from Elim and came to the desert of Sin. In (16:2) In the Desert the whole Israeli community started grumbling at Moses and Aaron. In (16:3), the Israelis said to them, "if only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." In (16: 12), the Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

**Exodus From Greek meaning- a going out, a departure or emigration,  
usually of a large number of people**

## Activities

### Questions for discussion

- Q. Why didn't God just supply sweet water to begin with?
- Q. When we have a problem, is it much easier to blame someone than to think through the problem carefully and spiritually?

- Q. Are we grateful to the Lord for his many acts of kindness in our lives?  
Q. Why does God have to test us repeatedly?  
Q. Do we have the spiritual strength to obey Gods commands?

## Lesson review

Take a look at how common grumbling is among Israel in the book of Exodus, even when they received manna. Does this still happen with us in the presence of our plenty?

What was the Israelites' reaction to the water situation?

What decree and law did God make at Marah?

Are we the kind of people who grumble instead of trusting God to supply our needs?

How well did the people do in keeping the instructions about gathering manna?

## Values for life

It's natural to turn to God when we are caught up in situations which are clearly bigger than we are, and beyond our ability to control.

What is not so easy, however, is to trust God and rely on Him to supply our needs in the normal course of every-day life

## Faith in Action

We tend to forget God when things are going well. On the other hand, when things start to go wrong, we tend to blame it on God. We start to doubt His goodness and His promises to provide and care for us.

When we face difficult situations, instead of despairing, we should treat it as an opportunity to increase our faith and trust in God. Hardships are part of everyone's life, and through our trust and faith in God, we will overcome them and discover what sort of people we are.

Our Responsibilities are:

To be steadfast in our trust and faith in God.

To not despair, and face hardships with courage.

To praise God for his immense Grace and Mercy.

### MEMORY VERSE

O give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

*Psalms 136:26*

## Prayer

O God, we thank you for the grace and mercy that you shower upon us, even as we grumble and waiver in our trust. Teach us your ways of justice and lead us to practice the generosity that you so abundantly bestow on us. Forgive our weakness and failings and make us worthy of the life that you have given us. In Jesus' most precious name we pray, Amen.

**UNIT 3 : Lesson 10**

**AIM:** To understand the origin of passover and the meaning of breaking bread and sharing wine

**Theme:** Deliverance



## Passover - The Festival of Deliverance

### Exodus 12:1-28 (NRSV)

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: <sup>2</sup>This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. <sup>4</sup>If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. <sup>5</sup>Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. <sup>6</sup>You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. <sup>7</sup>They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two door posts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. <sup>8</sup>They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>9</sup>Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. <sup>10</sup>You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. <sup>11</sup>This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. <sup>12</sup>For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every first born in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

<sup>14</sup>This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance. <sup>15</sup>Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel. <sup>16</sup>On the first day you shall hold a solemn assembly, and on the seventh day a solemn assembly; no work shall be done on those days; only what everyone must eat, that alone may be prepared by you. <sup>17</sup>You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your companies out of the land of Egypt: you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a perpetual ordinance. <sup>18</sup>In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty - first day, you shall eat unleavened bread. <sup>19</sup>For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened shall

be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land. <sup>20</sup> You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your settlements you shall eat unleavened bread.

<sup>21</sup>Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go, select lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover lamb. <sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two door posts with the blood in the basin. None of you shall go outside the door of your house until morning. <sup>23</sup> For the LORD will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two door posts, the LORD will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down. <sup>24</sup>You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. <sup>25</sup>When you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. <sup>26</sup>And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this observance?’ <sup>27</sup>you shall say, ‘It is the passover sacrifice to the LORD, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed down and worshipped. <sup>28</sup>The Israelites went and did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

### **Matthew 26:17-30 (NRSV)**

<sup>17</sup>On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” <sup>18</sup> He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” <sup>19</sup> So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>20</sup>When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; <sup>[a]</sup><sup>21</sup>and while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” <sup>22</sup>And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, “Surely not I, Lord?” <sup>23</sup> He answered, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. <sup>24</sup>The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.” <sup>25</sup> Judas, who betrayed him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” He replied, “You have said so.”

<sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” <sup>27</sup>Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the <sup>[b]</sup>covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” <sup>30</sup>When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

## Student Instruction

What do you know about Passover?

What is the significance of Passover?

What is the connection between the Last Supper and the Holy Communion?

## BIBLE EXPLORATION

We get the word “*Passover*” from a Hebrew word “*Pesach*”. The original term simply means “to pass over” but it refers to the frightening moment the angel of death ‘passed over’ the houses of Israelites without killing their first born while he was striking the first born of Egypt. This was the last of the ten plagues God sent to punish Egyptians as they rebelled against His command. God’s mighty deliverance is remembered and celebrated on the 14th of Abib or Nisan, the first Jewish month (Lev 23: 5-6).

God sent Moses with a mission to deliver his people from Pharaoh’s slavery. But Pharaoh refused to obey God’s command. So God sent a series of plagues to inflict the Egyptians. The tenth plague was a terrible one. During this plague the angel of God was sent to mysteriously strike the first born in all the Egyptian households. Though the Israelites lived in Egypt then, God spared the first born of all Israelites. Moses had instructed them to put blood mark on the door posts for the angel to see. So the Israelites in obedience to the divine command sprinkled the unblemished blood of the lamb over the door frames. As the angel of death saw the blood, he would “pass over” that house. Thus, God spared all the first borns of Israel from the angel of death. The historic deliverance came to be called “Passover.” The ordinance of Passover had three components:

- The killing and eating of the Passover Lamb (Verse .1-6; 8-11)
- The sprinkling of blood upon the door frame (Heb.11:28)
- The feast of unleavened bread for seven days (Ver. 14-20). God had commanded its continued observation in Exodus (12:25-27). This institution was clearly communicated to the people and they were to observe the feast every year in remembrance of their escape from Egypt.

But the Passover events were shadows of things to happen centuries later in the life of Christ. Like a Passover lamb that was sacrificed to spare the first born of the Hebrews, Jesus was sacrificed to deliver believers from the terrible slavery of sin. For both Jews and Christians, Passover signifies a time of deliverance.

The New Testament makes it clear that Christ is the true Passover lamb (Exodus 12:21; 1 Cor. 5:7). The early church saw the direct symbolic continuity between the slaughtered lamb of the Passover and the crucified Lamb of God (Jesus). When Paul speaks of Christ as our paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), he is affirming that God who acted mightily in ancient Israel’s release from Egyptian bondage by the Passover, is the same God who has acted in Christ to free us eternally from all sins. While observing His last Passover with His disciples Jesus explained that the symbols of bread and wine represent His body and blood, offered by Him for the forgiveness or passing over of our sins and the death penalty, our sins have earned for us (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14: 20-24).

The Lord's Supper is a strong reminder of what Jesus did in the past, a symbol of our present relationship with Him as well as a promise of what He will do in the future. When we use the words of institution, "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), every week during our holy communion, it represents the core of the Christian faith and how the grace and life of the risen Lord come to dwell in us. By participating together in Lord's Supper we picture the fact that we are one body in Christ, one with each other with responsibilities toward one another, and we anticipate the banquet of eternal and heavenly kingdom with Christ.

## Lesson review

1. What was the significance of the 1st Passover? (Exodus 12:12-13;22-23)
2. Why did the Lord want Israel to observe the feast of Passover in future years? (Ex 12:25-27)
3. What is the significance of The Last Supper to present day Holy Communion? (Luke 22:15-19)

## Values for life

- Christ is the one who invites us to the Lord's Table. He presides over it. So it is our responsibility to prayerfully participate in the Holy Communion to receive His grace.
- But it is on us to partake in the Holy Communion fully conscious of its true meaning and never make it a lifeless ritual.
- By participating together in the Lord's Supper, we realize and accept the fact that we are one body in Christ, one with each other with responsibilities toward one another.

## Faith in action

- Participate regularly in the Holy Communion with a true understanding of its meaning.
- Identify the obstacles that prevent us from participating in Holy Communion and work to overcome it.

### MEMORY VERSE

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."<sup>27</sup> Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;<sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. *Matthew 26:26-28*

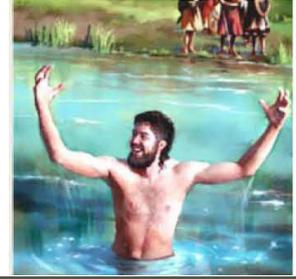
## Prayer

O Lord we acknowledge that You are the living bread which came down from heaven for our redemption. Help us not to forget the sacrifice You made. We thank You for bridging the gap between us so that we can have communion with You. Enable us to magnify Your Holy name through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**UNIT 3 : Lesson 11**

**AIM:** To learn that anyone can witness for God in any situation

**Theme:** Being God's witness



## Commander Naaman and the Captive Girl

### 2King 5:1-14 (NRSV)

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. <sup>2</sup>Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup>She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." <sup>4</sup>So Naaman went in and told his Lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. <sup>5</sup>And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. <sup>6</sup> He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." <sup>7</sup>When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

<sup>8</sup> But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." <sup>9</sup> So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup> Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." <sup>11</sup> But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! <sup>12</sup>Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup> But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean?'" <sup>14</sup>So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

## Student introduction

Have you ever heard of Christopher Reeve? Known as the ‘Superman’, Christopher was a very successful movie star; he was very handsome, and wealthy. Christopher won several coveted awards and many other honors. So he was well respected, loved and admired by countless fans. As Superman, he could melt steel, leap tall buildings, and fly with ease. Sadly, one day he fell from his horse. The accident turned out to be a great tragedy in his life as the fall made him a paraplegic and he ended up in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. In his tragic lonely days, no one seemed to think about this once famous person. The ex-superstar quietly died as a paraplegic in his wheel chair. Christopher Reeve left this world on October 10,2004 in Westchester County, New York. The world took little notice of his demise.

Today we want to talk about a great person who is deeply upset with a private problem. His name is Naaman, the commander-in-chief of the army under the king of Aram. The king held him in high esteem because Naaman was winning battles for him. Naaman truly was a great man. Despite his victories and favor before the king, he did not have any joy in life. He was always worried and upset about a skin disorder - Naaman was a leper. Leprosy defied any cure until the last century. Besides the sores (leprosy patients feel no pain) and discomfort, he was also lonely. Lepers also suffered from the strong social stigma about the disease. Worse yet, in those days people widely believed it was God’s punishment for one’s sin.

Naaman’s wife had a maid. The young girl was captured by Aram in one of his raids on Israel. She knew the power of the God of Israel and the supernatural ministry of Prophet Elisha. Knowing the condition of Naaman the young girl said one day to her mistress: “If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”

Naaman wasted no time in asking the king for permission to go see the prophet. The king quickly granted Naaman permission and wrote a nice letter of recommendation to the king of Israel. Naaman took with him 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothes. It was a lot of wealth but it meant nothing to him in his afflicted condition. It would prove later that Elisha had no use for Naaman’s wealth. The king of Israel read the letter; he was terribly upset and ripped his robe to pieces. The king’s letter was asking the king for Naaman’s healing from leprosy. There wasn’t a little thing the king of Israel could do about it; he had no power to heal even a light illness. So he took it as an excuse from Aram to open up a new war with Israel. Elisha who had received double portion of the Spirit of God than his master Elijah was a powerful prophet of God. He possessed mysterious knowledge through the Holy Spirit. So he sent word to the king asking him to send Naaman to the prophet. As the horses and chariots of Naaman and his officers arrived in style and stopped at Elisha’s door, Elisha’s servant came out to meet Naaman. Elisha already knew God’s will about Naaman’s healing. The servant told Naaman: “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.” Naaman lost his temper and commented the rivers of Damascus were cleaner than Jordan. Like a mad hornet, he stomped off. But his wise servants tried to cool him off and asked him to obey Elisha’s simple instruction. Naaman at last went down to river Jordan and immersed himself seven times obeying Elisha. Just as the servant had told him Naaman’s skin instantly became as good as new.

Naaman's healing in the river of Jordan teaches us a powerful lesson. God's ways differ from human ways. We will explore the details of how God intervened in Naaman's life and turned his sorrow into joy

### **Class Discussion**

- Do you know who Naaman was? Can you describe a leper?
- Who are the other characters mentioned in this Bible portion?
- How did this girl end up in Naaman's house in Syria from her home in Israel?
- How did she help Naaman?
- Our God comforted and healed anyone who went before Him with pain or a need

## **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

### **1. The Physical condition of Naaman: (V.1)**

Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army of the king of Aram. He was a brave man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He enjoyed great honor as a powerful commander. Everyone likes to have such honor and respect. But Naaman who held an envious position and enjoyed great success, and wealth was personally unhappy about his illness. Naaman suffered from an incurable skin disease that people even talk about; he had leprosy. No one ever liked a leper; no one would get very close to a person who got patches of white areas in the skin. There was no cure for leprosy at that time.

### **2. The captive girl's bold witnessing (VS.2&3)**

- She was a captive girl from Israel.
- She realized the real need of her master.
- She was bold enough to speak to her mistress about the disease of Naaman and share her faith in the Lord.
- As a person living without any freedom she could spend her days in utter bitterness and hatred instead of accepting her condition and trusting in God.
- Her faith helped her not to get angry at her master rather she talked to her mistress and strongly recommended a visit to Prophet Elisha in Samaria.
- It is so commendable that while living in the most unfavorable situation, she was willing to share her faith and wished for the wellbeing of her enemies.

### **3. God's prescription for curing Naaman's leprosy (Verse.4-12)**

- Naaman, the commander-in-chief, is told of a way for his healing by a slave girl.
- True, Naaman is a great conqueror but the help to conquer his personal illness ironically comes from the nation of Israel he conquered.
- The highly honored commander takes orders from a humble prophet of the Lord.
- Though unwilling, Naaman's obedience to God's word through Elisha brought him total healing and joy in life.

## Lesson review

- Describe the characteristics of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1). What disease was he afflicted with?
- How did Naaman's wife know that there was a prophet of God in Samaria who could heal Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5:2)?
- Discuss the faith and witness of the captive girl based on the story.
- Do you think our life and witness help others?
- Why was the king of Israel upset when he received the letter from the king of Syria asking him to heal Naaman (2 Kings 5:7).
- What was the instruction Elisha sent to Naaman through his assistant for the commander's healing? (2 Kings 5:10.)
- Why did Naaman become angry? (2 Kings 5:11-12).
- How did Naaman's servants convince him to do what the prophet Elisha told him to do? (2 Kings 5:13.)
- What happened when Naaman obeyed Elisha's instructions? (2 Kings 5:14.).
- What should we do if we want to receive a special blessing, such as healing?

## Values for life

- Be sensitive to the needs in the various areas of our lives and to that of others and earnestly pray about it to God.
- Be bold to stand up for God and share our faith as God opens up opportunities regardless of what we go through in life.
- Never forget that God is always faithful and will accept you and bless you beyond measures.
- Keep in mind that God's thoughts are quite different from ours and often our ways are not His ways.
- If there is a private sin or self-destructive habit you have been covering up like Naaman hid his skin disorder, repent and ask God for a quick deliverance. Faith in

## Faith in action

- Develop strong convictions of right and wrong based on the Scriptures
- Speak out our faith
- God will always empower us with the Holy Spirit to live out our faith in an ever dark world.
- Humility is extremely hard to develop but one has to be humble in the sight of the Lord so we can obey and yield to the will of God.

### MEMORY VERSE

Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?"  
<sup>18</sup> Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

*Luke 17:17-18*

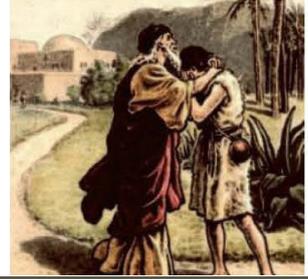
## Prayer

Lord, our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the lesson on Naaman healing. Thank you for healing several lepers when Jesus visited this earth. No illness is too hard for you to heal. Thank you for your mercy and your power. Today we ask you to touch every one of us in a special way so that we will be instruments of blessings. Send us the power of your Holy Spirit so that we too may witness like the young captive girl. Help us to see the needs of others and encourage them to get closer to you. In the name of the Lord we pray, Amen.

**UNIT 4 : Lesson 12**

**AIM:** To learn that repentance requires the forgiving love of God

**Theme:** Repent and return



## Forgiving Love of the Father

### Luke 15:11-32 (NRSV)

<sup>11</sup> Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’” <sup>20</sup> So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe - the best one - and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup> Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

## Student introduction

### **What is the real meaning and significance of the Parable of the Lost Son?**

The great novelist Charles Dickens once said the most touching story in literature is “The Story of the Prodigal Son.” The parable is truly one of the world’s supreme master pieces of storytelling. Jesus used only 504 words to tell this story. Most literary men regard this as the greatest short story ever told.

The parable of the lost son is the last one presented in a series of parables in Luke 15. The first one is on finding he lost sheep, and the second on finding a lost coin. All three of them end with a celebration as the lost items are found.

While many sinners and tax-collectors were intently listening to the teachings of Jesus, there arose a grumbling from the Pharisees and the religious scholars. They said: “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” (V.2 NRSV). It needs to be noted that Jesus spoke all three parables here, in response to their attitude. A parable is an earthly story that has a divine meaning. Jesus used parables often to drive home an important truth about the kingdom of God. Our focus today is on the parable of the lost son.

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## **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

Set in the Middle Eastern culture, the story of the lost son is the most dynamic and compassionate story of a father towards his lost son. We won’t find another one either in the Bible or any sacred literature. Of course we have the cross but that is not a story but an actual event. The parable portrays the heart of our Heavenly Father. The culture of the land was very different from where we live. We will be able to draw some fresh spiritual insights as we explore the episode together.

The story is told in five major steps:

- Request of inheritance.
- Realization of his state while being away from home.
- Remorse and repentance on his action.
- Returning home
- Re-joining and rejoicing with his father at home.

As the story opens, the younger son says to his father ‘Father, I want right now what’s coming to me.’ (V.12; the Message). It is a very shameful thing for a son to ask for his inheritance. But the way this son demanded to his father makes it even worse. In the Jewish cultural context, it is the equivalent of saying “I wish you were dead”.

Though a Jewish father would divide his assets among the sons, it doesn't happen while the father is alive. The sons inherit it after the death of the father. The father in this story did not try to counsel with the son for he knew his son will learn only the hard way. So the father divided the property and gave the younger son his part.

In a few days he turned the property into cash and left home for a distant country. Again, this is another insult to the father. In the Jewish culture, the son doesn't leave like this; while for the westerners it is not a big deal. But in Jewish families, it is such a shame for the father. People despise such a family. So this father is bearing two shames already.

The son headed to a Gentile land that doesn't have anything Jewish. The place has no divine laws or moral codes. In the new land he quickly found several friends and wasted all his money on wild living. He didn't have a dime left in his pocket. Worsening the situation, there broke out a famine in that land. Having spent all the money, he had no way of buying anything to eat. His hunger kept growing and he could barely walk. He looked for a job but nothing showed up. Finally he ended up feeding someone's pigs. It was a forbidden task for the Jews, for the law said "Cursed is he who feeds swine." But he had no other way. The pigs were eating better than him. He tried to fill his stomach with the food for the pigs. Then he came back to his senses. He remembered how the servants in his home were eating several good meals every day. (Let us pause here and see some truth).

He is far away from his father's home and the native land. After wasting everything he inherited from the father, he can't ask for anything. And he cannot ask him to be treated as the son. He deserved nothing.

What Jesus portrays here is a true picture of humanity. Humankind walked away from God, lost all their moral values just as the prodigal son did. This breaks their relationship with God. That gives God a bleeding heart. Only when people realize their spiritual emptiness, will they then start thinking of a turning back. They try to make excuses and justify their actions up to that point. God allows people to go through the self-inflicted misery helping to come to that point of realization.

As his thoughts raced, the wanderer learned what he was missing - the love, care and comfort of his father's home. He remembered how wicked he was to demand his inheritance. Being fully aware of the fact that he had lost his place at home, the son thought of working as a servant at home. He knew that would be far better off than stealing pig food. He decided to go back to his father. He would say: "Father, I have sinned against heaven. And I have sinned against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers." (V.18-19; NRSV). He knew, like any other person living in a broken relationship, that any sin is committed against God.

### **Returns Home with Repentance.**

His decision to return home with a grievous heart is the dramatic turning point in the story. He walks miles and miles to get back home. Finally he reaches the edge of the village. As he walked, probably he was practicing the lines of confession he wanted to speak to his father. The words show that he had prepared himself ready for the humiliation awaiting him at home on his return. He knows he is empty-handed, with not even money to buy a snack. He knew fully well how deeply he had insulted his father and brought shame to the family.

In the Jewish cultural context, one would expect a father ready to take vengeance for such an evil act. The Jewish fathers don't take such shame. Regardless of the situation, they wouldn't move an inch. But the father in our parable is very different. He forgets everything and starts running the moment he saw his son from a distance. Instead of asking any questions or demanding any sort of apology, the father simply falls on his son's neck and begins to kiss him.

The father demonstrated that his love was unconditional. It is not the picture of a Jewish father but the true picture of God offering His grace first as mentioned in Romans 5:8: "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." The son was totally surprised and couldn't say the second part of his speech. The son did not know that the father is full of love for him and had a big welcome back planned. Neither did the son know that the father was expectantly waiting for his return every day. The father had planned to welcome him back before he got too close. In doing so, the father was protecting the son from the sure wrath others would have against him. That was because he had insulted all of them by walking out on them. But no one can hold any grudges against the wayward son once the father reconciled with him in public. The son was totally reconciled. But the father paid a high cost for it. The father had to totally humiliate himself in front of others. God's grace is free but it cost the life of His son.

### **The Joyous Banquet with the Father**

Quickly after meeting the son and forgiving him, the father ordered a banquet as we read in Luke 15:24 'Let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' In the father's perception, his son was lost and dead but has come back to life.

Let's not forget that Jesus spoke of a definite celebration when the lost sheep or coin is found again. Jesus wants to celebrate the homecoming of the rebels. In a sense the banquet for the lost son here foreshadows the Holy Communion. The Holy Communion is a celebration of sinners being united to the Holy God.

We need to realise that sinners are not the center of attention; it is Jesus. He is the hero of the Last Supper Banquet. All glory is reserved for the father. When the Pharisees criticized Jesus for dining with sinners, they missed the point. Jesus did not eat with sinners to celebrate their sin. Rather it was a celebration of His grace.

This parable, the joy of celebration is to show the success of the father's costly efforts to find and save his lost son. The celebrations in the parables of finding the lost sheep and coin are not for the honor of the lost items but rather for the sake of the owner's efforts as well. It reminds us that as the lost sheep when we return to the Lord at His Communion Table, it is the celebration of God's glory that He found us.

One aspect of the Holy Communion we always need to remember is that we, as redeemed sinners, are offered continued table fellowship with Jesus. We err often but then get back again to his fellowship. So one cannot neglect the Holy Communion or choose to participate in it on a periodical basis as some do. It should never be forgotten that The Last Supper was a celebration of Jesus' costly sacrifice to reconcile us to him.

So the spiritual picture emerging from the story is very clear. At the Lord's Banqueting Table we are invited as sinners to participate in that sacred meal. Jesus is obviously the hero of the Last Supper Banquet and the sinners are not the center of attention. All glory is reserved for the father. As we participate in the communion, we are participating in the celebration of His grace. And all sinners are invited to participate with a repenting heart.

### **The attitude of the older son**

As we begin to look at the attitude of the older son, let us bring to our mind again the context of this parable. Jesus spoke it to correct the attitude of his critics. They focused only on the sinners, and the tax-collectors. Their minds were closed to see the all inclusive grace of God. Pharisees were critical of Jesus for he demonstrated His grace by eating and hanging out with sinners, and tax-collectors. But as he did so, he was doing a much greater and urgent work of transforming them. They didn't get how Jesus who claimed to be a prophet of God's kingdom can mix with sinners. One may wonder how they could fail to see the change Jesus was bringing into the lives of people by healing them physically, emotionally, morally, and spiritually. All one has to do is to close one's mind to be like the Pharisees towards the truth of God. They could not see the miserable condition of the human rejects rather they despised them for what they are. Without question, the older son represents the Pharisees. Jesus made that very clear.

The picture of the older brother is brilliantly drawn using small shifts of rich phrases in our story. The servant says, "Your brother has come home". But the older brother refused to think of him as a brother. He angrily says to his father, "this son of yours". The father gently corrected him reminding him the truth of the matter, "this your brother". The older son bitterly complaints: "I have been working like a slave for you." In truth they had been partners since the father had already divided his land and assets between the brothers (verse 12). Now everything the father has really belongs to the older son. The younger one has spent his inheritance. So the older one may be thinking that anything spent on the younger son now has to come from his inheritance.

As he fell into bad temper, the older son proves that he has no more real respect for his father than his brother had before he left home. We see him refusing to listen to the father's plea to come in. As we saw earlier, the father had to leave the guests and walk to where the stubborn first son was. Jesus is showing through this the truth that all the grumblers are out of line. But there is enough room left for them through God's generosity. But if they still want to stay out of the party because the father is so forgiving and loving, then that's up to them. But they can't blame it on lack of love from God's part. The joy and love showed towards the younger son does not diminish the father's love and joy for the older son.

We have to realize the older attacked both his father and brother in public. That was a bad insult to his father in front of all the guests. A western cultural equivalent would be to have a shouting match with your father at a wedding. Though he did not walk out on the father, he too has severed his relationship with the father at this point. Their culture expects that the father explode and reprimand the older son for disrespecting the father. But still the father is again willing to offer a costly demonstration of his unearned love. Now it is offered to the older son who pretends to be a loyal son. Leaving the banquet guests, the loving father entertains the older son standing outside and offers him the same love that the first son has just now proved to be unworthy of. It is because of the father's character so vividly presented in the story that it makes tremendous impact in cultures that are similar to the Jewish people.

As you may have already noticed, this parable has no ending - we are not told what the older son decides. Will the older son now enter the banquet and start following the extemporary behavior of his father? Or will he refuse to accept his father's loving offer? The issues are up for debate.

## Lesson review

1. What are the major elements of grace we can identify in this parable?
2. What did the lost son do to get the acceptance of his father?
3. What are the symbolic representation and meaning of the banquet?
4. Compare the attitude of the older brother with that of the Pharisees.
5. Can you identify with any of the characters in the parable? State your reason for it.

## Values for life

- Our God is like a father seeking for the lost and always willing to accept and enjoy the reunion.
- The character of our Heavenly Father never changes
- If we lost that relationship, we need to repent and return to Him and God will surely accept us back

## Faith in action

When we confess our sins and partake in our Heavenly Father's banquet, our forgiveness and acceptance are guaranteed by Jesus the Christ.

### MEMORY VERSE

I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

*Isaiah 43:25*

## Prayer

Merciful Father, I have sinned against you, please forgive me and accept me. Please allow me to enjoy the relationship with you, your Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Thank you for hearing and accepting me. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

**UNIT 4 : Lesson 14**

**AIM:** To understand that we must prepare our hearts to receive God's word

**Theme:** Preparing our hearts to receive Gods word



## The sower and the seed

### Mark 4:1-20 (NRSV)

Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. <sup>2</sup> He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: <sup>3</sup> “Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. <sup>8</sup> Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” <sup>9</sup> And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

<sup>10</sup> When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; <sup>12</sup> in order that ‘they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.’” <sup>13</sup> And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? <sup>14</sup> The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup> These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. <sup>16</sup> And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. <sup>18</sup> And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, <sup>19</sup> but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>20</sup> And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

### Student introduction

Today we will learn about a farmer who sows seeds in his farm.

Have you ever seen this process of sowing the wheat, rice or any other seed?

Can you tell me the common factors of farming?

- The ground needs to be prepared.
- Need good seed.
- Need a person or machine to sow the seed.

George Whitefield is credited with sparking off ‘The Great Awakening in America’. Except for George Washington, he was the most well known figure in the colonies, for he travelled through all the thirteen colonies and preached to any crowd he could find. He returned home to Bristol, England in 1739. You would expect a rousing reception for him in their churches. Guess what, he found the church doors closed to this great preacher.

Whitefield went straight to the mine workers and preached. Then he expanded his open air preaching to secular crowds in the market. Sometimes he had a crowd of 20,000. People were being converted by hundreds. Whitefield invited his Oxford classmate and best friend John Wesley to preach to the crowds but he refused. Preaching and winning souls outside of a church was offensive to Wesley.

## BIBLE EXPLORATION

The Jews had put Jesus out of the synagogues at this point. He started teaching in the open air. And large crowds followed him. He knew that the traditional synagogue preaching wouldn’t hold his listeners’ attention. Unlike the synagogue worshippers, the people in the crowd could walk away any moment. In order to keep them engaged Jesus taught them by telling attractive stories called parables. A parable is basically a comparison. Something on earth is compared with something in heaven, so that the heavenly truth may be better grasped in light of the earthly illustration. Jesus is called the master of parables for he made up parables spontaneously and used them with great effect.

In today’s parable we see Jesus preaching to a large crowd on the lake shore. This lake is the Sea of Galilee itself. To talk to a huge crowd he found it convenient to use a boat as a pulpit. A small boat was pushed out a little away from the shore and he sat on it. Since the listeners were sitting on the slope of the mountain, this setting worked as a natural amphitheater. He began to teach them telling a new story of a sower. The story talks about four different soil types: foot path (not paved), stony ground, thorny ground, and good ground. To understand the parable in depth we need to take a look at the ancient Palestinian style of farming.

During the time of Jesus, the farmers sowed the seeds first and plowed the ground after a while. But the foot paths were never plowed. That was the ground for the farmers and farm animals to walk on. Seeds can drop to the footpath in two ways. It can fall from the back of animals when they carry seeds; or, Also it can fall from the farmers hand by mistake while sowing on the ground near the foot path.

- 1) The Soil by the wayside represents hardness and unproductiveness of human hearts. Such hearts are hardened by difficult circumstances, and bitter experiences that they had in life.

What came of the seeds that fell on the stony ground? The seeds lying on top of the hard-beaten surface cannot grow in the soil. They lay on the surface. Being very visible in a clear area, the birds came down quickly and ate them. Likewise, the devil quickly takes away the word from the hardened hearts. The hearer is not even aware of it. The devil is actively engaged in taking the word away. He operates in any setting including the worship services. In this society it is so easy for the enemy to steal the word because some hearers are careless and focused on the latest gadgets. The Christian experience tells us that he cannot do this in the hearts of devoted Christians who prayerfully listen to the word preached.

- 2) The stony ground is a thin layer of soil that lies upon the bedrock. The soil here is good but it lacks depth. The seed that falls on stony ground sprouts up and starts growing. When the soil is heated by the sun, because the roots of the plants is prevented by the rock from going in deep for water, the plants wither away.

The shallow soil represents a weak faith of superficial hearers. Life is full of trials, temptations, and persecutions of different kind. When such hindrances to faith come in the believers' way, they defect their faith. They 'fall away' because the word they heard has not rooted in their hearts. The word translated "fall away" (V.17) refers to a stick placed in a snare. When animals touch the stick, it makes the trap to spring. Similarly the believer is trapped into something. They have no stability. Majority of the hearers that Jesus described here are like the stony soil.

- 3) The thorny soil contains the seeds or the roots of the thorns. The farmers generally don't work hard enough to clear the soil of the thorn's seed or roots. As the wheat seeds start growing the thorns also start growing and thorns take over the good plants. The thorns then choke and kill the farmer's seedlings.

The thorn-hearted people go to church but their thoughts are dominated by worldly things. Their preoccupation is with wealth and they desire trivial things and new technology items. The deceitfulness of wealth is in providing a false sense of security. This is a major issue in our society today as you may already know. Teaching about humility, love, sacrificial living, and heavenly focus are all choked out in a thorny soil like mind. Like the farmers, such people never prepared their thorny hearts to receive the message of God.

What matters the most in this life is to make sure the destiny of the eternal soul in us is taken care of. But some have not realized yet. They hear the word of God preached but it is choked right away by the mental concerns for other things. Before our faith can grow and produce some results we must remove the various thrones in the heart. That demands serious scripture reading and devotion. There are no substitutes for it.

- 4) Some seeds do fall on good soil and they are productive. The kind of people Jesus spoke of here is open and receptive to the Word of the kingdom. You have seen such in our community. They are not hard, shallow or deeply engaged in other things. Such people receive the message wholeheartedly and produce fruits.

In our parable the soil that brought forth thirty, sixty, and hundredfold is a class of hearers spoken of as the good ground. The sower can sow on this type of soil expecting good results. In addition, those who bring forth fruit also produce seeds for new sowing. So those who bring good yield are in turn sowers of Christ. Haven't you seen some Mar Thoma sowers?

The Great Commission (Matt. 28) highlights the importance of preaching the Gospel to every nation where you will face all types of soils. That is the fundamental mission of Christians. Paul wrote in Romans 1:14: "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish."

True, there are several issues facing the kingdom of God in our time, but the sowing will finally produce a great harvest.

There is something very serious about the parable of the sower. No one can make excuses saying that he/she was a bad soil type. Jesus himself warned that many who heard Jesus preach in their streets will be commanded to leave him on that final day of giving an account of our lives. "I didn't know all of this" is not an acceptable answer to him. That means everyone has a great responsibility when hearing the word of God. And that is the most important lesson we should take to heart from this beautiful parable Jesus himself taught.

## Lesson review

### **Who is the farmer?**

- The farmer (sower) in this story is Jesus Christ. But it can also be applied to Holy Spirit or any Christian who plant spiritual seeds.

### **What is the seed?**

- The seed is the Word of God, Bible.

### **What are the soils?**

- Soils are the ways in which people respond to the message of God's word. It shows the condition of their hearts.

Let us look at each soil, its response to the Seed, some observations, interpretations and applications.

### **Soil of a path**

- Result - The seed was eaten by the birds. It did not even take a root.
- Fruits - It did not bear any fruits.
- Application - It represents a person, who has a closed heart/mind, if a person is indifferent to the word of God, the Evil one can easily snatch away the seed.

### Rocky Soil

- Result - The seed grew up quickly, as the soil was shallow. When the sun came up, it withered away, since it had no root.
- Fruits - It did not bear any fruit.
- Application - It represents a person, who has a shallow understanding of God's word, he quickly receives the seed (like an emotional response). But when trouble or suffering and persecution come because of following Christ, the seed quickly withers away, since it is not rooted in the Word.

### Thorny Soil

- Result - The seed grew, but the thorns also grew and choked the plant.
- Fruits - It did not bear any fruits.
- Application - It represents a person in whom the seed grows, but the worries of life, the pleasures of the world quickly chokes the seed and it does not bear any fruits.

### Good Soil

- Response - The seed grew and produced a crop.
- Fruits - It produced a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.
- Application - This person receives the seed and understands it. The seed grows in him. He avoids the distractions, overcomes temptations, stands firm in the time of trouble, and produces many fruits.

## Values for life

- Preparation of our hearts before receiving the Word of God.
- Trials, temptations, and persecution will come in this evil world. When it comes, don't be disheartened.
- Worldliness is enmity to God

## Faith in action

- What kind of Soil are you?
- What is choking the seed (Word of God) in you?
- Are you growing in the Word?
- I want to be knowledgeable of human hearts and a good sower with Christ.

### MEMORY VERSE

Then pay attention to how you listen; for to those who have, more will be given; and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away."

*Luke 8:18*

## Prayer

Gracious Lord, we thank you for your Word. Remind us and help us to prepare our hearts ever time before we hear your word preached. Give us your grace to control our thought process while hearing the Word. Help us to change different areas in our lives so that we too can produce good results and be a sower with Christ. Amen.