July
2026

weekly @

ALL IN ONE RESOURCE



THE BLACKBURN DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

FULL OF BRIGHT IDEAS

WELCOME TO OUR LECTIONARY RESOURCE, WEEKLY@, WHICH HAS BEEN CREATED TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY BY PROVIDING IDEAS WHICH FIT IN WITH THE THEMES OF THE WEEKLY GOSPEL READING.

WITH SO MANY INSPIRATIONAL IDEAS HAVING BEEN WRITTEN OVER THE YEARS, WE'RE BRINGING THEM ALL TOGETHER IN ONE BUMPER RESOURCE, PROVIDING YOU WITH EVEN MORE CHOICE OF TALKS, GAMES AND ACTIVITIES. HOPEFULLY THESE MATERIALS WILL ENSURE YOU ARE FULLY EQUIPPED WITH EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO CREATE AN ENGAGING CHILDREN'S SESSION TO SUIT YOUR GROUP CONTEXT.

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Sunday 12th July 2026

THE STORY OF THE FARMER

Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

OVERVIEW

This very familiar parable is one of the few that Jesus fully explains the meaning of. It is wonderful that Jesus chooses every day, relevant and understandable references, many of which are still relevant today (farming in this parable, building in the wise and foolish builders, and the symbols of bread and wine for the Lord's Supper – things that have not fundamentally lost their meaning even in 2,000 years of progress and change.) This parable is often referred to as the Parable of the Sower, but the variable here, the aspect of this story that needs explanation, is the soil or the dirt. There are four clear examples of people's common responses when it comes to people's understanding about the Kingdom of God. We are the dirt and have very varied responses when Jesus tries to teach us something through the Bible, through other people or when His Holy Spirit speaks to us.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion One
The Rock
Worship For Everyone
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urmrckEFhX8

Suggestion Two
Everyday
Hillsong
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt7-tzUYV24

PRAYERS

Lord thank you for the message of the Kingdom planted in us. Help us to pull up the weeds of worry that threaten to choke us and miss out on the best you have for us. Lord we want to be good soil, producing a bumper crop for you. Amen

Loving God, thank you for planting your word like a seed in our hearts. Help us to listen, to make space for you, and to grow in love, kindness, and faith. Amen

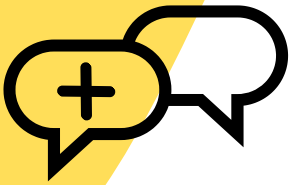


THEMES

- People can respond differently to God.
- God wants us to make space for him and our faith grows when we pray, listen, ask questions, worship, and are encouraged by others.
- When God's word takes root in us, it changes how we live.

12th July 2026 | Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

ALL AGE TALK



SUGGESTION ONE

There are many ways to retell the familiar story of the sower and the seed (really the story of the soils) but if you have access to a screen, consider using this animation by Max 7: Parable of the Sower.mpg - YouTube

If that's not possible, use visual aids as you tell the parable. Prepare four plant pots, the first one empty except for a toy bird, the second with rocks inside it and a 'plant' that can 'grow'. You could make something with green twine and paper (if you're feeling crafty!) that can be pulled up out of the pot a little and then shrivel back down. The third pot could have another little homemade plant and maybe a cactus to bring out to show what the problem is when the seeds fail to grow. The fourth plant pot can have 3 or 4 healthy 'growing plants' (you are likely to need the help of some volunteers here to lift the plants up out of the pot as they 'grow'). Tell the first part of the story, then stand over each pot again and read verses 18-23 – Jesus explains it so well nothing more needs to be added!

Ask the congregation if they can think of the time they were closest to Jesus. Challenge them that perhaps they should be closest to him now. This parable isn't just about people becoming Christians, it can also apply to those of us who have been Christians for a long time. Is there a reason why you aren't as close to Jesus as you once were? Do you sometimes come to church but don't really absorb the message that has been preached? Do you sometimes sit down to pray but spend the whole time being distracted by other things? Perhaps some stones, in the form of health, finance or relationship problems, have caused us to lose our focus on God.

Or maybe some weeds of worry have choked out the voice of God and stopped us from flourishing as we could.

Sometimes we get distracted by the world, and our faith can't really flourish. The old hymn asks us to "Trust and Obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey". Let's be good soil because when we really pay attention to the Bible, God can do amazing things through us so that we can thrive and be a blessing to others, despite our circumstances.

SUGGESTION TWO

Show the congregation a small pot, some soil, and a few seeds. Today, Jesus tells a story about a farmer who goes out to scatter seeds. These seeds might look ordinary – but they are full of potential. Jesus says the seed is like God's word: what we hear about God's love, what we learn about Jesus, and the way God speaks to us.

Show the soil. Jesus also talks about different types of soil. The soil is a bit like our hearts. Sometimes our hearts can be hard, like a path, where nothing can grow. Sometimes our hearts are shallow or full of weeds – maybe when we're distracted, worried, or too busy to make space for God. And sometimes our hearts are like good soil, ready to help God's word take root and his love grow.

Plant a seed in the soil, in the pot. Here's the good news: God is patient with us. He keeps planting seeds in our lives and nurturing us, especially when we make time to listen to him, pray, and care for one another. When God's word grows in us, it produces fruit – not apples or oranges, but things like love, kindness and forgiveness. Things that show others what God is like. So today, let's ask God to help our hearts be like good soil, ready for his love to grow and be shared with everyone.

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SET THE SCENE

WHAT IS 'SET THE SCENE'?

'Set the Scene' offers ideas for gathering activities at the beginning of your time together. It acts as a warm-up, mentally preparing children for the main elements of your session by activating prior knowledge and curiosity.

TOUCH THE GROUND

Before the session, prepare three trays or shallow boxes with different contents (e.g. carpet, sandpaper, pebbles). Keep them hidden so the children can't see what is in the trays. Invite the children to take it in turns to take off their shoes and socks and stand in the trays blindfolded to guess what the "ground is made of". Don't worry if some children are reluctant to join in with this - you can offer them the option to touch the contents with their hands instead. Explain that today's story is about the effects of different types of ground on some seeds.

DESIGN A GARDEN

Gather the children around a large sheet of paper and work together to design an ideal garden. What shape would it be, what features would you choose and what would you plant in it? Whilst the children might include a path in their design, it's unlikely that they choose to include weeds or an area of rocky ground where things struggle to take root. In our story today, Jesus talks about planting seeds in good soil so they can grow, just like in a well-designed and well-cared for garden.

WHICH SOIL?

Explain to the children that you're hoping to grow some seeds and have been given two types of soil but aren't sure which one to use. Show them two bowls; one with a bit of soil mixed with lots of gravel, and the other containing lovely, rich compost. Which one should you plant in? Why? The compost Compost is excellent for planting because it is full of nutrients which helps the roots to develop and the plant to grow. Today's Bible story is a parable that Jesus told about planting seeds in 'good soil'.

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DISCUSSION

SUGGESTION ONE

Show the children two bowls; one with gravel and rubbish in it and another with rich compost. Ask the children if they know how the two bowls fit in with today's story. Tell the parable of the sower using video (for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZEO_Ls2ERs , props, or a children's Bible, for example the Lion Storyteller Book of Parables (Bob Hartman, ISBN: 9780745964461).

Think about each soil, then show pictures of various bible characters and ask which category of soil the children think they fall into. E.g. a Pharisee might be like hard ground where birds come and eat the seed; Peter was also like the hard ground as he was led astray because of persecution for a while when he denied knowing Jesus because he was afraid (but he came back to Jesus later); the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-22 was like the seed choked by weeds when riches were more important to him than Jesus; Peter is also like the good soil because he grew in his understanding and he spread the news of the Kingdom to many other people which yielded a crop much, much, bigger than was sown.

Now try the exercise with some modern day types of people, e.g. the person who says God is just in your imagination; the person who likes seeing friends at church especially at Christmas but doesn't ever take time to pray, read the Bible or learn more about Jesus; the person who used to go to church but likes to do car boot sales every weekend now and is saving up for something special; the person who loves to pray, often talks to other people about Jesus and tries to read something from their Bible every day.

We'd suggest that you don't use the examples in order as the answers might be too obvious! Consider using pictures for both the bible characters and the modern day examples, who you could give names to, and have the four types of soil in front of you (these could also be pictures) so the children can actually come forward and put the pictures of the people where they think they should go. We need to choose to be good soil, to be obedient to Jesus and see how he transforms us and helps us to grow.

SUGGESTION TWO

Jesus liked to tell stories to help people understand his teaching. One day he told a story about a farmer who planted some seeds. As he scattered the seed in his field, some fell onto the footpath. What do you think happened? The birds ate the seeds. Other seeds fell on rocky ground. They sprouted but wilted and died under the hot sun because they didn't have enough soil to make deep roots. Some seeds fell in the areas where there were a lot of weeds, which choked out the young plants. But some seeds fell on the good, fertile soil, and that seed grew and produced a wonderful crop. Who can tell me what this means? Jesus isn't telling us how to plant a garden, he is talking about people hearing God's word. The seed is God's word, and the ground / soil is the people who hear it. The seed that falls on the footpath is like those who hear God's word and don't understand it, so they don't take it in. The seed that fell on rocky soil is like those who hear God's word happily but after a while they drift away because they don't have deep roots. The seed that fell among the weeds is like the people who hear God's word and believe what it says, but soon the message is crowded out by all the other things going on around them. The seed that fell on good soil is like those who hear God's word, try to understand it and put it into practice. It takes root in their lives and grows to produce great things. What kind of ground or soil do you think you are?

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GAMES AND RESPONSE

WHAT IS THE AIM OF A 'RESPONSE?

The response activity allows children to respond to the message in a meaningful way. It creates space for children to express their thoughts, ask questions and explore their faith, considering how what they've heard might guide their choices and behaviour.

SEED RELAY

Divide the children into teams and give each team two plant pots; one empty and one with Malteasers inside. You will pretend the Malteasers are seeds! Give every child a straw. They must race to suck a 'seed' onto the end of their straw and transfer it to the empty pot, taking turns within their team. Position the two pots close together if the children are little, and at opposite ends of the room so they have to travel, if they are bigger! Another option is to use tongs to transfer the 'seeds' for younger children.

PICTURE MATCHING

Hide pictures of different seeds and pictures of the flowers / plants they grow into all around your room. Challenge the children to find all of the pictures and then match the seeds to the pictures of the plant or flower. Talk about how the seeds will only grow into healthy plants if they are planted in the right sort of soil.

WEEDS OR FLOWERS?

Label one side of the room 'weeds' and the other 'flowers'. Gather the children in the middle and show some pictures of different plants. If the children think the plant is a weed they run to the 'weeds' side of the room, or if they think it's a flower they should run to the other. Weeds might include buttercup, dandelion, clover, whilst flowers could be tulip, bluebell, foxglove, lavender. Bring them back to the middle of the room before you reveal the next picture. Talk about the weeds in the story and the effect they have on the seeds.

GOOD SOIL

Talk about the ways we can help ourselves and others to be good soil. Come up with a list of 3 or 4 things that the children say and suggest that together you make up an acronym or actions in order to help the children remember these important things. E.g. Pray (praying hands), read the bible (hands open like book), talk with other Christians (use hands like puppets chatting to each other).

WEEDS

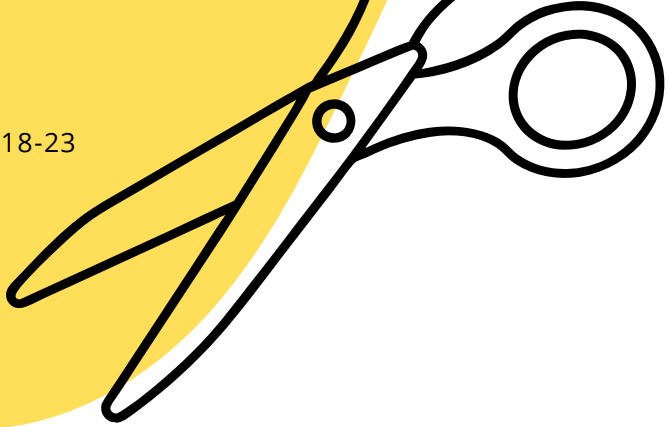
Look at some pictures of different weeds and talk about how they harm other plants. They steal water, sunlight and soil nutrients from food crops, and some even release toxic chemicals into the soil that inhibit the growth of other plants. What are the weeds that distract us from Jesus and stop our faith from flourishing?

PLANT POT PLEDGE

Label several plant pots with different actions to do over the next week, e.g. pray every day, read the bible, talk to others about God, etc. Give everyone either a real seed or a small scrunched up piece of paper which represents a seed. Invite the children to drop their seed in the plant pot that matches the action they would like to pledge to grow this week. Pray: *Father, help us to listen to your word and put it into action every day. Amen*

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ACTIVITIES



PLANT POTS

Provide the children with plastic or terracotta plant pots and lots of stickers to decorate them with. Older children might enjoy the challenge of using square shaped stickers to cover the pots like a mosaic. Alternatively, you could decorate the pots using squares of tissue paper and try decoupage. Include a Bible verse on the pots such as “This is my prayer for you: that your love will grow more and more; that you will have knowledge and understanding with your love” (Phil 1:9) You can write this on with a marker pen or use the sticker templates provided with this session's materials (Appendix 2).

CLAY SEED HEARTS

Make seed-growing clay hearts similar to those here: https://www.dossierblog.com/diy-seed-growing-clay-hearts/

All you need is water-based air drying clay, seeds and cookie cutters. If you also have some small letter stamps, you could use them to decorate the hearts with messages such as, 'Be good soil' or 'Grow in God's love'.

PARABLE COLLAGE

Provide the children with paper and different materials for them to create a collage representing the parable that you have been looking at today. Items might include:

- seeds
- sandpaper (path)
- small stones / small balls of grey tissue paper (rocky ground)
- bits of green / brown pipe cleaners (weeds and thorns)
- brown paper (good soil)

The children can draw a picture of the farmer on their collage if they want to. You could encourage them to add a prayer, such as: Jesus, make my heart good soil.

EDIBLE SOIL SNACK

Get the children to make their own edible soil cups by layering chocolate mousse and crushed Oreo biscuits in a clear cup. You could even add a few gummy worms to the top, and garnish with a spring of mint so it looks like it’s growing out of the soil. Let the children to enjoy the sweet taste of the snack whilst remembering the good things that God can grow in us if we are like the good soil in today’s story. *Be mindful of any allergies.

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TAKE AWAY

WHAT IS A 'TAKE AWAY' ACTIVITY?

A take away activity helps children to remember what they've heard and carry it with them afterwards. These activities often feature a challenge to do or think about something as part of their daily lives.

NURTURING FAITH

Give the children some seeds (something fast-growing like cress works well) to plant in their little decorated pots to take home. Make sure you provide some instructions on how best to care for the seeds; how to water, where the pot is best positioned, etc. Challenge the children to think about whether they are caring for their life with Jesus as they nurture and care for their seeds. Perhaps they could be reminded to pray or read their bibles each time they water the pot!

SEED MOSAIC

Cut out heart shapes from pieces of thick cardboard, e.g. from an old cardboard box. Make a hole in the top of the heart with a hole punch. Provide the children with an assortment of colourful seeds (beans, peas, rice, lentils, etc.) which they can glue on their hearts with PVA glue to make a pattern. Loop some string through the hole, so the decorations can be hung up at home as a reminder of today's parable. See here for inspiration: https://naturecraftsforkids.com/mothers-day-craft-seed-mosaic-heart/

PAPER FLOWERS

Follow the link here for instructions on how to make some simple but really effective paper flowers: https://diycandy.com/accordion-paper-flowers/ As you are crafting, talk about how Jesus compares God's word to a seed that grows when it lands in good soil. As we create the flowers, we are reminded that even small beginnings can grow into something beautiful. The children can take their flowers home as a reminder of how faith grows in our hearts when we listen to God and make space for his love.

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AT HOME



WHAT IS 'AT HOME'?

At home is a collection of questions and suggestions designed to help families grow in faith together outside of church. You can weave these activities and conversations into your rhythms of life to help you build on what you have learnt during groups and services.

SUGGESTION ONE

Go outside together and pull up a few weeds. If you don't have a garden, you could pull some weeds up from cracks in the pavement or in a communal flower bed. As you do, say a prayer either out loud or in your heads asking God to help you weed out worries from your life. Ask God to help you grow in strength as a Christian, putting him first.

SUGGESTION TWO

Go for a walk and see if you can spot the different types of ground mentioned in Jesus' parable; the path, the rocky ground, the weeds and the good soil. Can you remember what Jesus said about the seeds that were scattered in each of those places? When you get home, say the following prayer:

Father God, thank you for your word. Help us to be like the good soil and put what you say into action. Amen

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Share what you each learned in church today!
- What do you think "good soil" might look like in our lives?
- What things might distract us or stop us from listening to God?
- What are some small ways we could help one another be more like good soil?
- In Jesus' story, the same seed is scattered everywhere. What does that tell us about God and how much he loves people?

APPENDIX 2

Philippians 1:9
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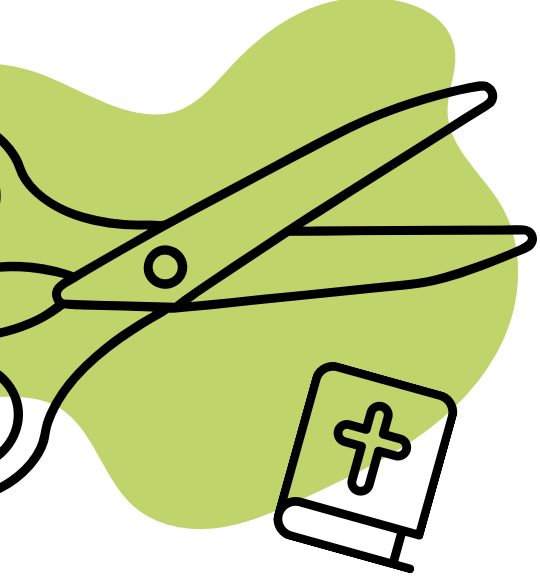
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THANK YOU!

A huge Weekly@ THANK YOU to all the incredible writers who have contributed to this resource over the years. Your creativity, dedication, and faith have shaped something truly special—we couldn't have done it without you.

We're also deeply grateful to everyone who has used our materials to share God's love with children across the Diocese of Blackburn and beyond. Your commitment to making Jesus known is inspiring, and we're honoured that this resource has been part of your ministry.



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