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# Abundant Possibilities

Faith celebrates the abundant possibilities that God sows in our lives and the lives of all people each day. Disciples may wonder at the mysteries of the seasons of growth. We may lament why things happen as they do. Yet God continues to invite us to love and give extravagantly in certain hope of God's future.

**Focus Scripture**  
**Matthew 13:1–9,**  
**18–23**

Additional Scriptures  
Genesis 25:19–34  
Psalm 119:105–112  
Romans 8:1–11

Abundant God,  
use our senses to  
open our hearts  
and minds to the  
richness of the  
scriptures. Help  
us to receive the  
gifts you sow so  
graciously and  
freely in our lives,  
and inspire us to  
share such bounty  
generously with  
our neighbours.  
Amen.

## Focus Scripture: Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

Jesus often taught in parables. According to *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (HarperCollins, 1996), the word translated as *parable* from biblical Greek or Hebrew “should more accurately be translated by the wider term ‘metaphor.’” The language in a parable invites readers to wonder about the meaning of the words for their own lives in God's realm. Jesus frames the parable of the sower in the focus passage with “Listen!” (verses 3, 9), an invitation to such reflection. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus' parable is followed by an interpretation (verses 18–23), understood by some scholars as the work of the early church as they reflected on Jesus' message.

Hyperbole – exaggeration – was a common feature of Semitic teaching in general, and Jesus' teaching in particular. In this parable, the very act of sowing in what some might say is a reckless fashion, letting seeds fall where they may, hints at the generosity and abundance of God's grace that is available to all. Also, scholars suggest that a thirty- to hundred-fold harvest would have been extraordinary for agricultural practices in that day.

Imagery of abundance and extravagance abound in Jesus' parable. The theme of abundance finds its way into our lives, inviting an expansive vision of what it means to be the church during this Season after Pentecost. This parable invites us to consider how God provides for the proclamation of the gospel, and to ponder the meaning of the differing soils in the parable. Might they imply that we cannot guarantee or control the outcome of acts of ministry? Why? Positively, God will bring the growth. Negatively, some will not respond. Life with God always remains invitation, not an imposition.

The parable imagines that one's relationship with God flourishes when word of the possibility of such a relationship is received. The parable recognizes the complexity that not all respond to this possibility in the same ways. We see that truth in life as well as scripture. Different life experiences open and close individuals to the presence of God. Even different times in an individual's life find one more available to or skeptical of that word of grace. Mystery exists in the spaces around hearing God's word, understanding it, and acting on it.

Images of seasons of growth as God's people weave through the other texts. In **Genesis 25:19–34**, seeds of dissension and strife struggle first *in utero* and then in a mix of hunger and opportunism. The contrast Paul makes in **Romans 8:1–11** between life according to the flesh (life governed by the weakness of sinful behaviour) and life according to the Spirit (life governed by the power of faith) parallels the varieties of soil in Matthew's parable.

The parable in Matthew explores the underlying question of what makes for life lived in relationship with God. Similarly, **Psalm 119:105–112** – an excerpt from a very lengthy hymn – celebrates how God's word brings life to those who keep its ways. The psalmist employs the imagery of God's word as a light that shows the way for life's journey. This “word” is sown to bring God's unexpected, abundant harvest where it is welcomed.

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God provides abundant possibilities for life through gifts of word and Spirit. In what ways have you and your church acted on the abundant gift of God's love and compassion given to you? What insight about your acts of ministry do you gain from Jesus' parable?

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