

About 7 years ago I went up to Darwin to spend 10 days with one of our sons and his family as they were living there for 2 years. Late one afternoon they took me down to Mindil Beach markets ... has anyone ever been there?

These market are officially called Mindil Beach Sunset Markets and it is a kind of tradition to go there; shop at the markets; have something to eat; and take the time to go onto the beach to watch the sunset ... it is one place where there is a clear view of the sunset over the water.

At the appropriate time we went to the beach and took up a place on the bank in readiness for the sunset. We were not alone ... we took up a position next to just one of the pathways to the beach and people kept coming ... young and old ... family groups ... people walking with their friends and some people on their own ... territorians and tourists ... some with drinks in their hands ... or munching on hamburgers or chips or popcorn etc. All coming with the sole purpose ... to watch the sunset.

But it was not the sunset that caught my attention ... it was the people. As I sat there on the bank I was struck with the sensation that this is what it would have been like 2,000 years ago when Jesus went down to the beach ... lots of people followed him ... young and old ... residents of the area and people who were passing through the region ... families ... groups of friends and individuals ... all with a sole purpose ... to see and listen to this man who was doing miraculous things ... who was teaching with integrity

and honesty ... and who displayed care for all. As I sat there I also spied a little boat ... like a dragon boat on the beach and, at some stage, was put into the water and kept just a little way from shore ... just as is described in our reading from Matthew today. I was so taken I got out my phone and took a few photos ... let me tell you I do not take many photos but this occasion was special for me.

2,000 years ago people came to a beach to listen to Jesus and what does Matthew record Jesus as teaching that day? Amazingly enough he does not talk about fish or the number of grains of sand or water, elements of the environment they were in at the time. Jesus talk of seeds and a sower ... again features they would be all too familiar with.

Jesus shares with them all what we often refer to as 'The Parable of the Sower'. This parable could be referred to as the parable of the soils as the different types of soil and environments the seeds are sown in, is important and Jesus later helps the disciples understand this perspective of the parable. It could be called the parable of the seeds as the possible harvest from the seeds is also portrayed.

Today I would invite you to think a little more about the title The Parable of the Sower and for us to reflect on the significance of the Sower.

It is to be noted the sower does not carefully put each seed into a specially made furrow or hole in the dirt prepared

solely for that purpose. No. He literally tosses the seed onto the ground allowing it to fall anywhere ... everywhere ... between the rocks ... in open spaces ... in areas where weeds already have a foothold ... and in nice rich soil. It is the generosity of this action which was ... to those listening that day, and to us today ... spell binding. This seed is not being restricted to an ideal environment. Being seed which can germinate and grow - it is being given this potential no matter what soil and environment it lands on.

The people who assembled on the beach that day 2,000 years ago came from many different circumstances ... each of them would have had unique and sometimes complex issues they were dealing with. Those gathered on Mindil Beach a few years ago each had their own issues and circumstances ... and those of us listening to this parable today also have our own different circumstances and unique issues.

The fact the sower released the seeds liberally speaks of the generosity of God. God's love, God's kingdom, God's seed ... the spiritual environment in which we are all invited to live in. It is thrown out to all people in all their circumstances with the freedom to choose to take it and allow it to grow ... or to reject it. In some instances, the environments in which people find themselves may have the potential to detrimentally affect the future of those seeds. The parable talks of the rocky ground ... the presence of weeds ... and the hunger of birds.

But God does not discriminate with God's love – God's seed ... God sends the invitation to all.

And God invites us to do the same ... to spread God's love everywhere ... no matter what the environments may be like.

Do we fall into the trap of judging an environment and think that God's love will not take root there and therefore we do not share it?

Or are we willing to act as the sowers of God's crop in all the places we go? What a great opportunity we have to be Sowers of the seed too.

May God give us the will power, the courage and the enthusiasm to sow God's love as God intended.

God of Life, let us live as people of hope, expectancy and willingness; spreading your love and rejoicing in your provision in Jesus Christ. Amen.