

Parable of the Sower Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

You will need:

- Dried beans or other large seeds
- Four plant pots, seed trays or buckets with labels:
 - ROAD / GRAVEL / WEEDS / EARTH
- Plants - stick bottom of plant to base of pot and clip top to edge of pot
 - ROAD: no plant
 - GRAVEL: 30cm yellow yarn with a few paper leaves
– **do not stick to bottom of pot**
 - WEEDS: 1m green yarn with leaves + 4x 1.2m red yarn with big leaves. Tie red yarns together on separate clip
 - EARTH 5x 1m green yarn with leaves or lush artificial vines. Clip each separately to edge of pot
- Glove puppet bird
- Inflatable, plushie or cardboard sun + optional sunglasses
- Four helpers – give each few seeds and put a pot at their feet

Road

- Helper puts seeds in pot.
- **A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road.**
- Say “Ooh look!” and point away. While everyone is distracted, bird glove puppet picks up the seeds.
- Act like you don’t know what happened. “Where did the seeds go?”

Gravel

- Helper puts seeds in pot
- **Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly.**
- Pull yarn a little. Give child sunglasses. Brandish sun at plant.
- **But didn’t put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly.**
- Keep pulling. Plant comes right out of the pot. “Oh. It had no roots.”

Weeds

- **Some fell in the weeds.**
- Helper puts seeds in pot. Pull green yarn then pull red yarn.
- **As it came up, it was strangled by the weeds.**

Earth

- **Some fell on good earth.**
- Helper puts seeds in pot. Get congregation to make “Oooooooh!” noise as helper pulls first plant, then next and next. Cheer!
- **and it produced a harvest beyond the farmer’s wildest dreams.**

Jesus said, **“Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn’t take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person’s heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road.**

“The seed cast in the gravel—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

“The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the kingdom news, but weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it.

“The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.” (Matt 13:18-23 MSG)

I’m sure Jesus’ hearers were thinking the same as us, “Ah yes, of course, we’re the good earth,” and yes, we are if we have heard and responded to the Good News of God’s love. But I know that sometimes I can be the other types of ground. I wonder if that’s true of you as well.

Sometimes I’m like the road. God speaks and I am just not listening. In one ear and out the other. Doesn’t even register. It’s a bit like Moses and the burning bush. I bet God spoke to Moses a bunch of times before that but Moses wasn’t listening. He thought it was a bad dream caused by indigestion – too much quail before bed. So God had to pull out the megaphone with the burning bush – *then* Moses listened! I can be like that sometimes. I’m not expecting God to speak and I don’t hear when he does.

Other times I’m like the gravel, the rocky ground. I hear and I’m all keen. “Yes God. I’ll do that. Good idea, thanks.” But, like New Year’s resolutions, my enthusiasm quickly fades. This is often because I’m trying to do it in my own strength and that’s never how God wants us to work. Jesus said “take my yoke upon you,” and a yoke is supposed to be worn by two, pulling together, working alongside.

Or perhaps I’m the weedy ground, clogged up by other things. Seriously, there’s a lot of life that needs doing. *Stuff*, you know? Do my tax returns, get the PE kit cleaned for Saturday. When does that bill need paying? Who needs taking where and when do they need picking up? It can be easy for the *urgent* to crowd out the *important*. Of course, the stuff needs doing, but it’s good for me to check how I spend my time. Does it fit with what I say is important? Perhaps a little weeding is in order from time to time.

And that leaves us with the good earth, when we hear God’s word and it takes root in our hearts and produces good fruit, more that you could ask or imagine. What kind of ground will we be today?

Crochet Pattern for Plushie Sunshine

Yellow and orange DK yarn

4mm hook or size required to produce a close fabric

International instructions. For US: dc→sc

Work in a spirals

inc = work 2dc in next st

NB: increases should *not* align on the sun in order to make a circle rather than a hexagon. Adjust start of round if needed.

Sun

Using yellow yarn and

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1: 6dc into magic ring | [6] place marker for start of round |
| 2: inc x 6 | [12] |
| 3: (inc, 1dc) x 6 | [18] |
| 4: (inc, 2dc) x 6 | [24] NB: incs should <i>not align</i> |
| 5: (inc, 3dc) x 6 | [30] |
| 6: (inc, 4dc) x 6 | [36] |

Place markers after repeats to help counting, if required Continue working with 6 increases per round until circle is 10/20/30cm across or required size. Work ss to blend. Fasten off.

Make two matching circles. Embroider a smiling face on one.

Rays

Using orange yarn

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1: 3dc into magic ring | [3] |
| 2: inc, dc, inc, dc into 1 st inc | [5] |
| 3: (inc, 2dc) x 2 | [7] NB: incs should align, last dc is into 1 st inc |
| 4: (inc, 3dc) x 2 | [9] |
| 5: (inc, 4dc) x 2 | [11] |
| 6: (inc, 5dc) x 2 | [13] |

Continue working, increasing 1 each side per round, until base of cone is 4/8/11cm across when flattened or required size (approx. $\frac{1}{3}$ of diameter).

Work ss to blend. Fasten off.

Make 10 or number required to fit around circumference.

Pin sun discs right sides facing, with rays between, points facing inwards.

Back stitch through all layers leaving a 3cm gap.

Turn right sides out, lightly stuff and close gap with ladder stitch.

