

Your river in heaven brims over.

We listen to and read the gospels in order to be fed, to be nourished, to be granted wisdom and understanding about the nature of our lives and of what they mean. The gospels are not stand alone pieces of writing, to be considered for an hour each Sunday and then to be put away. No, they are interactive and generative teachings which have a place in our daily lives. What Jesus says in them through his words, and particularly through the parables, and what he does through his deeds as described, are spoken and carried out so as to elicit a reaction. Now that reaction can be a positive or a negative one, an affirmation or a rejection. The words “follow me” spoken to a fisherman on the one hand and later to a rich young man on the other, show just how wide that dichotomy of response could be. So what makes one person say *yes* and another say *no*. What is it that stirs the mind and heart of one individual to leave everything and follow, whilst at the same time cause another to shake his head and walk away?

It's a big question which isn't going to have a simple answer, but perhaps, just perhaps a clue lies in the phrase that Jesus uses today to describe the state of people's minds and thoughts: *for the heart of the nation has grown course*. What are we to make of it and what is it saying? One thing that frustrates many people about modern living is the ease with which some can simply decide and choose to abandon the ways and traditions which has served our society so well as a model of good living. I'm thinking here of the willingness to be generous. Generosity is a quality which if we lose, stifles and diminishes us in so many ways, but above all it coarsens us by making us unwelcoming, unforgiving and above all unloving, and the sad thing about it is that it can happen unwittingly and unknowingly because we can make ourselves feel good by being passively generous rather than actively generous. The more we lose the desire to be actively generous, the more passive our generosity becomes until ultimately we make a decision to leave it up to someone else, and what in the past were great spontaneous expressions of kindness and compassion, freely offered and done out of love for people are now reduced into calculated and pre-considered what's in it for me gestures that reflect the deeds and thoughts of the *rich young man* rather than the impulsive action of the *fisherman*.

The parable of the Sower has, in common with all the parables, many layers which can be explored to draw out the riches of its wisdom, but let us notice that from the very outset of this parable that the abiding quality of the sower (God) is his generosity. It is of the nature of God to be generous with his cast. The seed is sown with limitless and unrestricted abandon; it is indeed a broad cast. It means of course that some of the seed will never come to fruit as it falls in unresponsive territory and this can happen with us too. Our offers of generosity can be rejected and opposed yet the story goes on to describe not a begrudging response to this rejection, but a joyful anticipation of the abundant harvest that will follow whenever that generosity finds a home wherein it comes to fruition. As disciples who have responded positively to follow Christ, let us learn from him how to be generous with our love, with our talents, and with our gifts. And in being thus taught, let us teach each other and the world, with its coarseness of heart, just what true generosity means and looks like.