

Once upon a time... 12-18 July 2020

Bible time  **Matthew 13.1-9,18-23**

Jesus tells simple stories, called parables, to help people understand an important message.

Life today

Have you ever been told a story that helps to teach you something? Maybe you've heard of 'The Boy who Cried Wolf' or 'The Hare and the Tortoise'. Jesus used stories like these, called parables, to help people understand and remember the things he was saying.

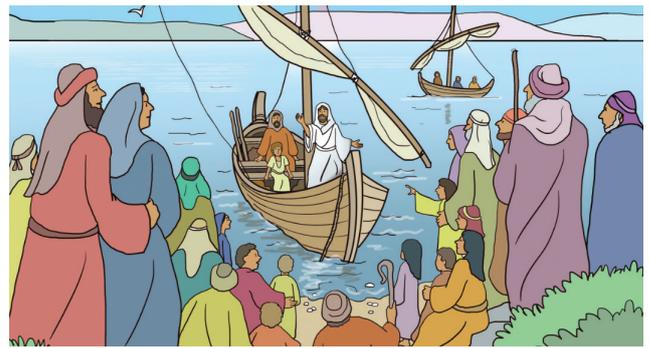
[Read the story together then explore it using these questions.](#)

Question time

- What things cause people to lose their enthusiasm and joy for God's word?
- Jesus kept telling the crowd to 'Listen!' What do you need to do to be a good listener?
- What makes stories such a powerful way for Jesus to teach people?

Activity time

- **Casting seed**
Set out four cups or bowls on a table and label them: path, rocky ground, thorns and good soil. Take a handful of rice or lentils and 'broadcast' it by scattering it across the table. How much of it went into the bowl representing good soil?
- **Listen!**
Take it in turns to say a sentence twice, but changing one word the second time it is said. Everyone else has to listen, to see if they can work out which word was changed. Talk about what makes it easy or hard to listen.
- **Stories**
Try to read a Bible story together each night this week. You could take it in turns to choose a favourite story and say what you like about it. Listen carefully to the story, and share with each other anything special that you noticed. Did you hear anything new? Did anything jump out at you?



So many people wanted to see Jesus and hear what he had to say, that he had to sit in a boat and teach the people standing on the shore. He told them many things through parables.

'Listen!' Jesus said. 'A farmer went out to sow his wheat seeds. As he scattered them, some of the seeds fell on the path and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell onto rocky ground. At first, they grew quickly, but when the sun came out they got all burnt up because they had no roots in the shallow soil. Other seeds fell among thorns, which grew up around them and choked them. Other seed fell on good soil and they grew into thirty, sixty, a hundred times more wheat. 'Listen!' Jesus said again. 'If you've got ears, listen!'

Jesus explained the parable of the sower to the crowd. 'What did I mean by the seed on the path being eaten up?' he said. 'Well, that's like when the good things that God has planted in our hearts get snatched away by the devil. And the seed on the rocky path? That's like when someone hears God's Word and loves it and is full of joy, but their enthusiasm disappears as soon as trouble comes their way. And the seed among thorns? Well, that's like when someone hears God's Word but worry and greed take over. But the seed planted in good soil – ah, the seed in the good soil is like the person who hears God's Word, loves it and lives it, so it produces thirty, sixty, a hundred times more goodness in their lives.'

devil a personification of evil, also called Satan or 'the evil one'.

Prayer time

Give everyone the opportunity to share a story of something happy that has happened to them today or that they have seen in the news. After each one, say, 'Thank you, God, for the good things in this story.'