Trinity 5: A Sting in the Tale 12th July 2020

Matthew 13 vv. 1-9, 18-23

Bishop of Selby

As a child growing up in Uganda we were always told to shake out our boots and shoes before we put them on to make sure there was no scorpion in them since scorpions have a nasty sting in the tail.

Matthew 13 is the Parables Chapter and Jesus's parables are stories with a sting in the TALE. They challenge us to change so that we can see and embrace the sort of world God is bringing about.

They are given to form us into a new family based not on blood but on water, not biology but baptism so that as followers of Jesus we become an exhibition of his way.

The Parable of the Sower is one such parable and the sting in this tale is for the disciples rather than the crowds, the committed rather than the curious, the learners rather than simply the onlookers.

And for Matthew, the story teller, learning is key to his Gospel. Up to Chapter 12 Jesus teaches by showing. Now he begins to teach by telling tales which he challenges his followers to understand so that they can continue this teaching as we read in Matthew 28 v20.

So what is the sting in the tale of the Parable of the Sower?

Well according to theologian Stanley Hauerwas the sting in this tale for we rich people in the Global North relates to our wealth.

As followers of Jesus, we, like the disciples, tend to see ourselves as the good soil. The crowds are the rest. Yet our riches have become thorns chocking the seedlings of faith. v22.

Riches choke faith because they are a substitute for trust in God and as such they inhibit our capacity to imagine the different world Christ is offering us.

Yet why do we cling onto riches when most of the global Church is poor yet more trusting and when we have seen the fragility of this riches based faith under the ravages of Covid19?

So the Parable of the Sower has a sting in its tale: a sting which asks us who we really trust, love and follow: is it riches or is it Christ?