

Parish Church of **St. Barnabas, Swanland** *Sharing Christ through friendship.*
 Small Group notes for week beginning Sunday **26/7/15 (Trinity 8).**
 Isaiah 5:1-7 & Matthew 13:1-9 - “*Let me tell you a story (2) – The Sower*”

Welcome	When have you most memorably heard God speak recently? Was it when you expected?
Worship	<i>Suggested songs: Songs of Fellowship: 215 I heard the voice of Jesus; 386 Master speak; 443 Open our eyes; 505 Soften my heart, Lord; 418 O Jesus I have promised (esp. v.3). (NB: 20 files containing about 30 newer songs are available to borrow from the office for groups)</i>
	<i>The sermon from Sunday’s service is available to listen to on www.stbchurch.org.uk (click on the ‘downloads’ tab)</i>
<u>Read</u> Isaiah 5:1-7	This passage is one of several Old Testament ‘parables’ – in poem form, unusually. Note God’s care for his people, described in vv.1-2. What ‘good fruit’ is God expecting from Israel? Why have they failed to produce it (v.2-3 - see also v.7b) What is to be the consequence? How was this fulfilled in history? In what way is the church like the vineyard of Israel and how can we learn from this?
Matthew 13:1-9 (and also vv.18-23)	<p>In this ‘earthly story with a heavenly meaning’, whilst there is still one key point to the parable, this passage is more of an ‘allegory’, with several elements of the story each having a separate meaning. Unusually Jesus gives the meaning himself in vv. 18-23. (v.3 - note that ‘he told them many things in parables’ – i.e. including the other parables in 13:24-52).</p> <p>Jesus talks about 4 types of soil/people and the result of the seed/ word falling on each. What are these four types and what happens to the seed in each case?</p> <p>i) The seed which fell on the path (v.4/19) - How is it that people can hear the gospel message but not understand it? What can be done about it? Are there times when you know you have ‘heard the message about the kingdom’ but not understood it? Why?</p> <p>ii) The seed which fell on rocky places (vv.5-6/20-21) - Why does the seed wither? What conditions do people need to be able to put down ‘roots’? How can we help? Are you aware of being ‘rootless’ at times?</p> <p>iii) The seed which fell among thorns (v.7/22) - How do the thorns prevent the plant from thriving? What were the ‘thorns’ of life in Jesus’ day? Are they any different today? What ‘thorns’ are a particular threat to fruitful growth for 21st-century Christians in our area? For you?</p> <p>iv) The seed which fell on good soil (v.8/23) - What ‘crop’ does Jesus want believers to produce? How do we increase productivity? How fruitful do you feel your life is at present?</p>
Witness	<p><u>Pray</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ for your mission link person(s) or project. ❖ for all to hear, receive and understand the message about the kingdom. ❖ for ‘ears to hear’ - and put into practice – what God is saying to us. <p><u>Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ when to meet up again – and perhaps the occasional social gathering? ❖ Don’t forget CakeWalk (9.45am, 26th August) and ‘Holiday at Home’ at St. Barnabas - 26-28 August, 10am-4pm, including lunch.