



Image: Vincent Van Gogh, *The Sower (Sower at Sunset)*. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license

Dear Friends,

**A few weeks ago, when we were looking at Jesus' parables about seeds in Matthew's gospel, I illustrated those sermons with several of Vincent Van Gogh's beautiful paintings of wheat fields.**

I was thinking about that, listening to Ben's wonderful sermon last Sunday, and how – although the acts can sometimes stand-alone – it is so much richer to know the intention behind them.

And that is true of these wheat field paintings.

Some of you will know that, as a young man, Van Gogh pursued a religious calling. In 1876 he was sent to Isleworth, in England, where he taught Bible classes and occasionally preached at a Methodist church. Then, on returning to the Netherlands, he studied for the ministry but did not finish his studies. His father funded him to move to Borinage, in Belgium, to work with coal miners, and there he obtained a six-month trial role, but according to biographer Rober Wallace, *"His self-imposed zeal and asceticism cost him the position."*

After a period of withdrawal, he rejected the church establishment but found he could express his *"love of God and man"* through painting. He was drawn to the biblical parables and saw in wheat fields, particularly, *"metaphors for humanity's cycles of life, as both celebrations of growth and realisation of the susceptibility of nature's powerful forces."*

*"The best way to know God,"* he wrote, *"is to love many things. Love a friend, a wife, something – whatever you like – (and) you will be on the way to knowing more about Him; this is what I say to myself. But one must love with a lofty and serious intimate sympathy, with strength, with intelligence."*

So, no wonder the paintings worked so well with those seed parables! They were painted for them! Illustrating those stories was Van Gogh's intention.

Each of us – as Ben said on Sunday – have our own words, our own language, to express the way in which Jesus is close to us. And we should use it! Van Gogh's vocation turned out to be painting, not pastoring, but knowing the intention behind these paintings, that he painted them to communicate these parables, and hearing him speak of that, adds to the power of the message he wanted to convey. As he wrote in 1889, *"What can a person do when he thinks of all the things he cannot understand, but look at the fields of wheat... We, who live by bread, are we not ourselves very much like wheat... to be reaped when we are ripe."*

We can have confidence sharing what we know of God - in our own words. They will speak to someone – perhaps uniquely, as Ben said on Sunday. Or they will spark something in someone that will challenge their thinking. And people, when we speak from the heart, will be thankful that someone has taken the time to share with them – someone with 'beautiful feet', as the Scriptures say!

***Grace and peace,***

***Belinda***