

NEVER GIVE UP

Beverley Owens challenges all MU members to persevere in their work, and follow the example of many who have faced persecution for their faith.

The passage from Luke 8:1-15, is well known for the parable about different ways seed is sown. Jesus sees a farmer sowing seed as he is walking along the road. He teaches on the way, because the synagogues were not open to him, allowing him to enter and teach as he once did.

Verses 1-3 mention a mixed company of women who served Jesus out of their own resources. Mary Magdalene had seven devils cast out of her, Joanna was the wife of the manager of Herod's household, and then there was Susanna who supported Jesus and the twelve Disciples.

Verses 4-15 is a parable, in which Jesus used a picture that all his hearers would understand.

Firstly, in verse 4 we can see that the parable describes the growth of the Kingdom. Jesus' ministry then, and now, still has the quality of growth. Some of the seeds that were planted had growth but were ineffective; and some seeds that were planted kept growing quietly, had good quality growth and yielded a fruitful crop.

Secondly, in v 11 Jesus explains that the seed is the word of God, and the Kingdom of God will advance as God's word works in people's lives. They are called to repentance, faith and obedience and the authority of God's word, and Jesus is teaching that this is the way that God's purposes are achieved.

Thirdly, v 15 reminds us of the correct response. We must listen with spiritual receptivity and a readiness to obey. Jesus also explains unproductive responses, and the resistance and opposition to his word.

This parable encourages us never to give up or be overcome with despair. We have to keep on sowing the seed as it ultimately becomes the harvest of God.

Mothers' Union members in Nigeria are actively involved in Bible study, evangelism, prayer and worship services, seminars, retreats, conferences, training, visitation and care for the less privileged. Participation in the program has enabled them to develop a lifestyle that is necessary for spiritual growth.

In some of the Anglican dioceses in Nigeria, persecution is a reality as there is tension between Muslims and Christians. Many Christians have died for their faith and others have been tortured.

In the Diocese of Kaduna, their Jacaranda Farm is in full operation. There are three sections: the Horticultural, the Catering and Pottery, and the Conference and Chapel section. Mothers' Union is very involved in the Catering and Pottery. For the Conference section, young men and women from both Christian and Muslim communities come together for between six weeks to three months of community life together on the property.

On the property, the young people will develop their expertise in poultry farming, raising rabbits, fishery, and pottery, and as they graduate, these practical experiences will give them a variety of skills to take with them when they return home. In addition, as neighbours, both Christian and Muslim families will gain maximum exposure to each other's cultural activities. This situation is having a positive effect in the areas of tolerance, respect and maturity in both cultures.

The word of God is being sown. The Christians have not given up in a part of Nigeria where the persecution of Christians is a reality. The challenge for us is great. We also are not to give up. We are not to give up praying for those we know who have received God's word and who have resisted, because some time later, even years afterwards, they may come to believe.