

Pastor Jon's Sermon from July 12, 2020

The Parable of the Sower

Text: Matthew 13

“The Wasteful Sower”

In our Gospel for today, Jesus is preaching from a boat to a huge crowd standing on the beach. I like this form of physical distancing that Jesus used... preaching from a boat. With how hot it has been, this sounds really good to me. I wonder if the church finance committee can look into springing for a boat for the pastor that can double as a pulpit during Covid-19? After all, What Would Jesus Do?

Today we get our first parable of the summer. I love Jesus' parables because there are so many takeaways for us in our context. A parable literally means “to throw alongside”. I learned about Parabolae in math class... a parallel curve with a common center point. Parables describe God's kingdom as compared to ours... or better yet God's dream for the world by engaging the hearer's imagination and challenging conventional perspectives. Here, Jesus teaches a parable about farming to peasant farmers... which made up a large part of the crowd. These peasant farmers were typically strapped with debt to the Roman Empire and could barely make a living. They needed a word of hope to cling to. My guess is their ears would really perk up when Jesus said, “Listen! A sower went out to sow.” “Hey, Jesus is talking about us, we better listen up.”

And as the sower sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, sprung up quickly, but the sun scorched them, because of lack of depth of soil. Still other seeds fell among the thorns, but the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!

So in this Parable you have a sower sowing seeds everywhere on every kind of ground. Their sowing seems a little wasteful or indiscriminate. What kind of sower is this? Some say this parable should be called the parable of the prodigal sower. Prodigal means

extravagant or wasteful. This sower is very generous in their sowing and doesn't seem to care what the outcome will be for the seeds.

There is a sense of faith that the seeds that fall on the good soil will provide enough. How many of us live this way, not worrying about results or outcomes? We like control, don't we? This more evident than ever when so many things seem out of our control right now.

Compare how we sow seeds today. We are very selective in the soils we plant in. We cultivate the soil first, we fertilize the soil, we add compost to the soil. Or if you are like me, you go to the store and buy a few bags of good organic soil with everything you need in it. We typically only plant in good soil.

This sower sowed on all types of soil. And other than the seeds that the birds ate, the plants still sprung up. I have even seen plants grow from bird droppings. If the seeds are the word of God, how selective are we in how and where we share it?

Keep in mind the saying, "Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary use words." Whether you know it or not, we as Christians are always planting seeds. People are always watching you. How you live, how you treat others, what you say. Do you sow seeds of love or something else. As sinners, it often is something else.

The law for me in this text is that we are too selective in the groups we surround ourselves with. This is understandable in Covid-19. I think Jesus is telling the hearers to keep on planting the seeds regardless of where you are and if you think it will grow or not. We give up too quickly on people. The yields in the parable were abundant... 100, 60, or 30 fold. A typical yield in those times was 5 to 10 times the seed. So we are talking impossible yields. These yields outweigh the potential loss the sower might experience.

So if Jesus Kingdom is compared to ours, the seeds that fall on good soil may be smaller in number, but will grow exponentially. God will provide an amazing harvest. And who knows where else God can give the growth.

For the church and for Christians, we should not give up in our witness of the Gospel... with our families, our friends, our co-

workers, our classmates. We may experience temporary setbacks, or people who have hardened hearts at first, or families who have overcrowded lives, or people who receive the Word enthusiastically at first but fall away. We as a church need to be generous and indiscriminate in our sowing. Even if it seems we have meager results we still sew.

So go out this week knowing that you are a sewer of Kingdom seeds. I preached at a memorial this weekend after I wrote this sermon. I realized I was acting more boldly in my proclamation regardless of who the hearers were. Who knows what seeds would be planted that day. I felt emboldened by my own sermon, which isn't always the case.

Now may the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.