

Text: Matthew 13:18-23

Theme: The Sower Went Out to Sow...

July 16, 2017

If you have ever planted a garden, reseeded areas in your lawn, or planted crops in the field, I'm sure you can envision the sower in our text as the seeds fall from his hand onto the path, among the thorns, and into the good soil. Parables, such as this one, were Jesus' teaching moments and today's parable focuses on hearing and understanding. As we focus on this parable, we seek to learn the message behind the sower and the seed.

I. By virtue of our relationship with God, we are sowers of the seed. A. To be His sowers, we need to understand the soil conditions. 1. As a sower, sometimes the seed will fall on the path. In faith terms, we share the message, but nothing happens. Frequently, our response is to think we did something wrong, that we didn't get it right, that somehow, some way, we should have been able to make that seed grow. Since we know the joys of living in faith, we want the seeds we plant to take root. We want others to know what we know. Yet, sometimes, we plant the seed, nothing happens, and we find ourselves disappointed.

2. As a sower, sometimes the seed will fall on the rocky soil. Living in Wisconsin, we're familiar with rocky fields, rocky soil where we wonder how anything manages to grow between the rocks. From a faith-perspective, our text tells us that these seeds take root. If we could stop there, we'd say, "That's great! My efforts did just what I intended." But there's a problem. When life gets tough, those seeds wither and die. As sowers, it doesn't seem right. We planted the seed; it took root. Why didn't God step in and make sure that faith-seed continued to grow? How could He allow it to die?" As we ask all our questions, we sometimes think our efforts were wasted.

3. As the sower, sometimes the seed falls among the thorns. Growing gardens and flowerbeds, we know all about weeds. In the faith-realm, weeds are even more devastating. Jesus tells us that those thorns and weeds, the cares and misguided ideas of fame and fortune choke out our faith-message. As we picture the imagery of weeds choking out a garden, we think prevention. What can I do to stop it, to make sure it doesn't happen? Yet, in reality, it happens. Some hear the Word, but it doesn't stick and we wonder what we could have done differently. When we know how precious heaven is to us, it makes us all the more determined to successfully sow the seed.

4. As the sower, we're told that some seed falls on the good soil and bears fruit. As we hear those words, we say, "That's how it's supposed to work. I sow the seed through my words and actions and the recipients take it to heart and bear amazing fruit!" If that would happen all the time, we'd have ample motivation to keep sowing. As sowers, we are called to sow. We're not called to determine the outcome. As confusing as it may be to us, sometimes the seed bears fruit and other times it dies. But before we say, "I may as well not even continue as a sower," the seed falling on the good ground motivates us, inspires us, if you will, to continue as His sowers.

B. As disheartening as sowing can be at times, what do we continue to do as God's sowers? 1. We continue sowing. In God's field, sowing isn't based on results. We sow because that's what we're called to do. When the seed doesn't take root, we

sow more seed. When the seed takes roots for a time and then it dies, we keep sowing. In many respects, we function like the farmer who says, "If I sow enough seed on my field, I will eventually reap a harvest." Whether we see the results or not, we continue to sow because we know that if our feeble efforts enable just one more person to arrive in heaven, to receive their crown of eternal life, it was worth it.

2. We expect results. Recall the words from our Old Testament lesson, "So shall My Word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose." What is God telling us as His sowers? "There will be results. Therefore, expect results. Use those results as your motivation to continue sowing. I will not waste your efforts." What's the difference between expecting results and seeing results? Maybe we don't see the results, but seeing and expecting both motivate us to sow. As God's sowers, we expect God to work and, because we know God is working, we continue our simple efforts.

3. We continue to wait patiently. We're not very good at waiting and we have an even tougher time waiting patiently. We want results now. Our world revolves around instant everything. Within our instant world, God says, "Wait patiently. Don't give up. Don't think it's time to quit. Don't stop sowing because if you stop sowing, nothing can happen!" As we sow, we wait and as we wait, we sow more seed. While we do one, we continue to do the other. It may be months or years before we see evidence, but when we wait patiently as we continue to sow, God will bless our efforts, and, if God blesses our efforts, that, in and of itself, will make it all worthwhile.

4. We continue to believe that our past efforts are bearing fruit. How many times does a farmer walk out and check his crop after he has planted it? Does he plant and never look back or check to see the outcome of his efforts? As we plant the seed of God's Word, we reflect. We believe that our past efforts are bearing fruit, even though we may not see the evidence. God doesn't waste anything. As we continue as His sowers, we continue to believe that God is using our efforts to produce results that we never realize. When we believe God is still using our past efforts, we are motivated to continue sowing convinced that the outcome is in God's hands.

5. We continue by encouraging more sowers. The farmers in our area that farm three thousand acres or more, do they get on their John Deere A or their Farmall M and expect to get it planted? Our mission field is the world. With more than seven billion people in the world, we need more sowers, more who realize that their simple efforts can be used by God in amazing ways. Jesus says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." We need more. As farmers today need more than a John Deere A or Farmall M, so also, we need more sowers who say, "Wherever God leads me, I will sow the seed and leave the results in His hands."

6. We can all picture the sower sowing the seed, but God asks you today, "Will you step into the sower's shoes and be another sower who went out to sow?" Amen.