

July 12, 2020

The parable of the Sower... I love parables... I'm always reminded that we don't so much interpret parables, as much as parables interpret us.

What we see and how we see it, is always different from one person to the next. And not only that, but at different seasons in our lives.

Quick story... I sow a garden every year; I plant a garden every year. This past week, I started picking green beans. Sometimes I blanch and freeze them, sometimes I pickle them... I used to use pole type beans and plant them along the fence line to my garden. They were easy to pick, but I think the deer got more of them than I did. The last few years I've been using bush type beans, they're harder to pick.

I bend over the row, look through all the leaves, pick every bean I can find, and take a few steps and keep picking. Once in a while, I look back and amazingly, I always see beans that I missed.

In fact, last week, I think I went over one area about four times, and every time I looked back, I saw more. Even though I thought I was picking carefully...

I think parables are a lot like picking beans. Whenever you think you found the meaning, you take another look, and surprise, there's more to see. Our gospel readings for the next few weeks will feature parables. I think the purpose of parables themselves are to plant seeds. And so, it's appropriate that we start our sequence on parables, with the parable of the sower.

In this parable, the sower goes out to plant seeds, and the seeds fall everywhere; on the path, among the rocks, among the thorns and on the good soil.

In each situation, Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of the Kingdom, and in each scenario, different things happen; the birds eat some, the sun scorches, the thorns choke, and some seed produce abundantly. And even the seed that lands in the good soil, there are different amounts, some a hundred-fold, sixty-fold and thirty-fold.

I'll be honest, when I plant my garden, I'm very careful of putting seeds exactly where I want them—where they will produce the most. Seeds cost money, I don't want to waste it. I'm sure our farmers are very careful when planting their fields. The question I would like to wrestle with today, is, why does the sower in our story plant so much seed? Especially in places when there's no chance of producing anything?

Lots of little stories today... I loved Seminary, but sometimes it could be a humbling experience. I remember one day, writing a paper on suffering and evil, I included what I thought were some brilliant insights from the book of Jonah. I thought, "Boy the professor is really going to be impressed," I was feeling so smart.

When I got the paper back, in the margins, my professor made some very gentle comments that in effect, totally reversed my whole argument. I thought I was so brilliant, truth was, I just wasn't seeing everything.

Little confession, when I first started reflecting with our parable for today, I started to think about all the ways that I was one of those seeds that got planted in the good soil. I'm sorry, it's a little humiliating to admit... And perhaps we all have that tendency. Then I started to think again...

And, truth is, as you all know, for most of my life, God was sowing seeds in my life that didn't produce anything; and some of those seeds got eaten by the birds, or scorched, or chocked out... It's just a fact...

Perhaps all of us, know what that's like... I'm reminded of the *Borning Cry* song, and that phrase, "In a blaze of light you wandered off, to find where demons dwell..." I think we all kind of get that... As we live and breathe, we go through different seasons in our lives. And thank goodness there are many seasons in our lives...

I've been so blessed in my life to have been involved with older adult ministry. Frequently, when I visit older adults, I hear stories affirming how incredibly unique and meaningful and productive their lives have been.

I hear stories of raising families, hard work, faithful journeys, good friends. I also hear stories about grieving and suffering and how wisdom and new hope emerged... Many stories of lives that have produced abundantly, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty. And it's all a miracle!

The good news today, is that the sower in our parable, is throwing seed everywhere... Everywhere the sower goes, the seed is sure to fall. There is no limit to the amount of seed being sown. And not only that, I imagine the sower is casting seed all the time! Not just once, but continuously...

If there's any chance of growth, that chance is taken. The amount of seed is limitless... And like the abundance of God's love, the sower can't help but spread the seed, it's simply what happens. Wherever Jesus goes, healing happens... Wherever God is experienced, love flows...

As we live into our baptism, and over many seasons, God is continually sowing seeds of hope. It's just how it is. The Word about the Kingdom, is that God loves and forgives you. And that changes everything...

Instead of seeing the world through a lens of scarcity, we see the world through a lens of opportunity and abundance... We are people of resurrection hope, and that's a different way to see the world. And because of that, transformation happens; Change happens... Abundance happens... 100 fold, 60 fold, 30 fold...

Life by life, and year by year, God's Kingdom comes, on earth as it is in heaven. Let anyone with ears listen... Amen...