

I have something to share with you, that may sound a little embarrassing. By my quick count, this is my 49th Sunday here. I would hope I would know all the members faces and names by now, but there is one face that I don't know the name to. This man was here every single service Thursday and Sunday for months when I got here. Suddenly he disappeared, but all of the sudden he was back in church, just as regularly as before. I haven't learned his name, I simply know his title. He's known as the sower of seeds. And there he is, doing his job week after week. This painting, like the parable of the sower, is something we may think we are familiar with, but you may find there's more to it when you take a second glance. Jesus reminds us that it's time to build and it's time to sow the Word! Look again at the sower. He isn't carefully planting the seed in a few select places. He sows the seed everywhere. We are reminded that we can't be picky when we sow the seed. The Word is for everyone! Look again at the sower, he isn't concerned at all, but is looking forward to the next place to sow. We are reminded that we don't need to worry about the Word. We are reminded that it is God who works through his seed, his Word, so that it produces fruit.

"He who has ears let him hear!" Jesus says. That's kind of an odd thing to say isn't it? Doesn't everyone have ears? Everyone who can hear has ears. Hmmm....Even people who can't hear have ears...What is clear is that Jesus wants everyone to hear this message. Just as the seed is scattered everywhere, on all kinds of soil, the Word is spread everywhere to all kinds of people.

When you think about the sower, isn't it odd that he doesn't just sow the seed on what looks like good soil? He sows it in places that don't make sense! If you were a farmer with a precious amount of seed, wouldn't you want to put it where it could grow and not waste it? There is a lesson here for us. We learn from this that the seed of the Word can be sown generously. We won't ever run out of the Word, so we don't ever have to think about saving it. Besides, the bigger point is, we can't tell what soil is good soil or hard soil within a person's heart. There's no room for holding back the Word from someone, whether their outward appearances discourage us, or if we've known a person our whole lives. When it's time to build, it's time to sow the Word to everyone!

But this brings us to another question: Whose job is it to sow the seed? Jesus explained what the soil and the seed was in his parable, but what about the sower? Elsewhere in the Bible Jesus gives the entire church the mission to make disciples! The sower is anyone in the church! It's you and me!

God places many people in the world to sow the Word to others. Parents start sowing the Word to their children, even as they read Bible stories when their child is in the womb. Parents sow the Word as they use it to encourage, discipline, and raise their children at every stage of life.

Pastors and teachers sow the Word too. They help the parents with their job of sowing the Word to children, Pastors sow when they preach the Word, when they go door to door, and when they provide comfort and consul. Pastors really do have the best job on earth! They get to spend their lives studying God's Word every day so that they can teach and talk about his Word with other people! Pastors are blessed by having the opportunity to shepherd gatherings of believers and equipping them to sow too! You can actually make a living doing this amazing thing! It's not surprising that we have more calls for pastors than we have men to fill them. The seed is sown everywhere and God blesses that work! Encourage our young men and boys who express the desire to become pastors! Encourage them to be full-time sowers of the Word!

Perhaps now you are thinking that you don't really fit that description of a sower I've given so far. But then you've missed a big point. Notice how the sower of the seed in the parable isn't given any special training, the sower doesn't have a specific age, the sower doesn't need to have unique skills or gifts, the sower's name is left a blank. It's a blank you can put your name on. You are a sower of the Word whenever you tell people what you did on Sunday morning (Thursday night), you sow the Word when you share your faith with your family and friends, you sow the Word whenever you tell anyone about Jesus. God gives us the tools and the instructions, so you can be a sower of the Word!

Yet, can it really be that simple? What about that child, that friend, that coworker that you *did* sow the Word to already, but now they couldn't care less about Jesus. What about that time you built up the courage to volunteer for an outreach event, but felt as if you accomplished nothing? Could it be that some sowers will be more successful than others because they're better at making the seed grow?

This parable also reminds us that it is God who makes his seed grow not us. In fact, when we put the effectiveness and the fruitfulness of the Word on us, we are arrogant, we are beginning to place trust in ourselves more than in God! If we see the Word work in someone and produce faith, we never deserve the credit because it is God who makes his seed grow. Look at the parable of the sower. The sower doesn't do anything with the seed after it is in the ground...he can't! It is what inside the seed that makes it grow and produce fruit. Likewise it is what is inside God's Word that produces faith and fruit through the work of the Holy Spirit. The faithful sower takes no credit for God's Work.

This parable encourages us to trust in the Means of Grace to do exactly what God says they will do. Often we may be distracted by trying to get inside someone's head. We want to make them want to believe. When someone disagrees with God's Word, we might want to logically convince them and argue them into believing. Charles Spurgeon once said, **"The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself."**

If God's Word is so powerful, then why doesn't it always grow? This parable uses different kinds of soil, not to say some people are just better than others, but to show us what people do with the seed of the Word once they receive it. The seeds on the path tell us about some don't hold on to it at all and the devil gladly snatches it away. They simply can't be bothered with something so trivial as the Bible. The seeds in the rocks are others who gladly receive the Word. It sounds good message, but once they realize that the Word might cost them something in this world, they get rid of that seed of faith. The seeds choked by weeds are the others who believe the Word, but their love for things of this life, their jobs, their entertainment, their earthly happiness, prevents them from fully living their faith. They don't produce fruits, and it's hard to tell if their faith is alive or not. And finally we have the last group. The seeds that fall on good soil. Here the Word is planted as the Spirit goes to Work and faith is established, and fruits of faith follow.

What's so good about having this seed of faith? Remember when Jesus told everyone with ears to hear. He also said

To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God

Without faith, the Word of God means nothing. It's like being the people who only heard the story of the parable, but didn't stick around to hear Jesus explain any of it. But for those with a heart that receives and believes the Word, Jesus tells us that God will work his blessings in us. We have the Word and we have Jesus! In faith we can hear and understand, see and perceive God's Word, so that we do repent and have forgiveness. To the unbelievers, Jesus was just a good story teller. Through faith in God, we know Jesus is the fulfillment of the Word. He is our Savior and Messiah. It is the great mystery of heaven that the Son of God became the Son of Man. It is the great mystery of heaven that God died for his sinful creation. May we always pray that God create in us hearts of good soil where he can plant his Word deep in us, so that if it is his will, he produces fruits from us so that we may sow a hundred more seeds in the hearts of others. We receive the seed with Joy because it shows us Jesus. Amen.