

Theme: "A Sower Went Out to Sow" - St. Matthew 13:1-23

The text for meditation for this evening is from the gospel of Matthew which I read before. Let us pray: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Amen

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Friends in Christ, in the Gospel of today we hear Jesus' parable about different kind of soil on which seed falls. The parable tells us that 3/4 of the seed, does not end up where a good Sower would want it to go. This is a far cry from modern farming. You can see around this church that farmers have planted corn and you can see that these plantations have nice neat rows and the seeds are almost surgically planted exactly where the farmer wanted them to go, so that there will be the greatest yield, because the goal is production, the goal is profit, making the biggest gain and the most money. Maybe the goal is different when the sower is Jesus. He just scatters His seed abroad, not seeming to care where that precious seed falls.

How do we understand this parable? Let us talk about this. When Pharaoh heard the word of God, his heart was hardened. When Mary, the mother of Jesus heard the word of God, she became pregnant with the Word incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we hear the word of God, as poor miserable sinners filled with repentance, we receive forgiveness. The Holy Spirit is busy there calling, gathering, enlightening, and strengthening. But, not all will accept this. Not all will accept the word of God. This is a mystery that we are never really going to understand.

In this parable about how the kingdom of God works, Jesus is just telling us that this is how it is; not all will accept His word and receive it. Not all will accept forgiveness and eternal life as Jesus gives it, and thus miss out on the goal that Jesus has for them. This is a reality, some will not accept. Some will not believe. Some, who believe for a time, will fall away.

This parable is taught early on in Jesus' ministry. He is still very popular and great crowds gathered around Him. There have been heals and great miracles. Now Jesus is going to teach what these things mean. Now He is going to take them from the miracles and point them to the Kingdom of God that is Himself, He is the bringer of the Kingdom, the Sower who so cavalierly, abundantly, graciously, and continually casts His seed so that some will believe. And yet, not everyone is ready to receive that word. And we are going to find that as we hear this word, look at it, and study through it, that we are going to do the same things as a lot of the people who first heard it probably did.

We are going to be asking ourselves, what kind of soil am I? How have I received this? Some are going to think that this is just an agricultural lesson, while others will see something a little deeper. But, the thing that you should really be wondering about is if this parable is about a sower? Is it about seed? Or, is it about soil?

Friends, this parable is really about Jesus letting people know a little secret, but a very important secret. Last week's reading Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." The secret is that so much of what Jesus teaches, and so much about the Kingdom of God, and so much about the Christian faith is not going to make a lot of sense to our human minds. Look at the parable, some of the things that the sower does do not seem like the smartest things to do, like throwing seed on places where it is not going to grow. And then, the rejection of so many of the people, the various kinds of soil, to the word of God.

So, primarily, this parable is about the seed, which is the word of God. Second, it is about the Sower. And finally, perhaps, it might deal with the soil. But, make sure you understand, that is not the main thing, even though that is exactly where your mind goes. Granted, lots of times when this parable is preached, it will be preached as a soil parable. This takes you places that you should not go. You are either self-justified, filled with confidence, because you are pretty certain that you are good soil. And, why not, you are sitting here today. Or, you will be filled with doubt and condemnation because you are the bad soil, of which there is no hope.

And yet, there is always a warning here, that the seed that sprouted so strong can wither so quickly and easily. Meaning, that the things of this life, our worries, disappointments, and our own sinfulness, can cause us to fall away from the faith, and that precious seed can die out.

With these words Jesus is not so much warning or condemning or speaking words of judgement, but is preparing His Church, and especially, His under-sowers, for disappointment. The word which is preached and taught will not always produce the fruit that we desire. There will not be any perfect method in the church to outreach others. The attendance of our church is evidence of that. So understand that, it is about the Seed and the Sower, which kind of end up being the same thing.

Here is a Word of God, that does what it says, meaning that it will accomplish the purpose for which God sent it, and it does not matter where you and I are in our sin and unbelief, and what kind of soil we think we are, but the Sower comes with reckless abandon, wildly scattering the good seed, which is really undeserving love, and grace, and mercy, and compassion, and forgiveness, and salvation for sinners, so that we are going to be given to be good soil because He will keep

scattering that seed on the hardness of our hearts, distractions of our cares, and the troubles in our life.

The whole thing of this very vague and difficult parable is the fact that we are going to have nothing to do with the power of the seed, that itself is in the Sower, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who sends the Holy Spirit to call us by the Gospel of forgiveness, and keeps us in this true faith to life everlasting. The Sower casts this seed about, and it is not like it is not expensive, for it is the message of forgiveness and eternal life, for which Christ died, by shedding His holy and precious blood and by His innocent suffering and death. And yet, the Sower casts it about.

For Jesus profit does not seem to be a concern. Yield does not seem to be an issue. Numbers really are not a focus. Although, Jesus is concerned for every single soul. Jesus has been sent by His Father to do His Father's will, and we know that His Father's will is that all should be saved. And that would mean you too. Jesus is not all about a show of numbers here, because that is not what love does or is about. We scorn the seed cast amongst the thorns and rocks, and trampled underfoot, but Jesus loves the people of the thorns, those hard of heart, so He will never stop, even with abandon, scattering His seed.

We could almost say, especially among the hard places where the seed is not supposed to grow according to our logic and reason, that these are the ones who Jesus has the greatest concern for and He loves the most. Thank God for that, for that would be you and me.

So, the Sower keeps sowing, and we keep preaching. That is what the Sower is about, and what His Bride the Holy Christian Church is about. We keep casting that seed about with the same gracious generosity as it has been so graciously and generously cast about on us. We are not trying to save the seed of God's word, hoarding it only for those who will receive it well and bear the good fruit. As if we can know who will believe and who will not. No. We do not stand at the door and say, you, you, and you can come in, but not you.

The door of the church stands open, we preach to everyone, they all get the same preaching, the same sermon, the same message of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ and only through Jesus Christ. For that is the only message and sermon that we have. And, here again is the word we are called to preach. You are that field in which the heavenly Sower sows His seed. You are that bad soil that He would make into good soil. No soil is self tilling. No heart is self-softening. God does the tilling and turning. He does it through the difficulties and disappointments and disasters and diseases, the trials and tribulations in our lives.

He does it with His Commandments that clear away our boasting and bragging, that plough under our pride; that break up our hardened hearts. With that tilling blade He cuts through our hardness to the depths of our deadness. He weeds out every distraction and every idol of our life, and every denial of Christ. He teaches us to trust Him, to receive everything as a gift from His hand, to recognize His hand even in the most painful things. He turns and tills us like soil. He breaks our hearts in contrition, and into those broken and contrite hearts He sows Christ, the seed that bears fruit. And it is Christ who bears fruit in us, a hundred, sixty, and thirty fold.

And so, when it feels as if God is ploughing you under, the parable of the Seed and the Sower reminds you of what He is really up to. He is making good soil out of you. And, in your Baptism, in the hearing of the forgiveness of your sins, in the Lord's Supper, He is sowing Christ into you. Expect a harvest from the seed that was sown. The Word God sows will not return to Him empty. He will raise you from the death of your sin, from the death of your grave, like seed sprouting in good soil. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Amen.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord,
and Savior. Amen.