

Matthew 13:1-8, 18-23

July 12th, 2020

“Our Sower”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

6th S.A. Pentecost

Vicar Miguel Gonzalez-Feliciano

Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours from God our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Parables]

Parables. Most of the lessons Jesus teaches are taught in the form of Parables. In Scripture, you and I are familiar with the word. In the world, we're familiar with the practice as well. How often were you read book as a child that had a deeper meaning? In movies, I've seen lessons taught that were hidden behind fantastic stories and driving characters. By engaging the imagination and producing remarkable characters who remain deep in our memories, stories can create truth. These stories aren't always fiction either. How many youths are inspired by movies like the *Blindside*, *Remember the Titans*, or *Rudy*? The lessons these films teach are stories that encourage and promote virtues like perseverance, hard work, and diligence.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out these things though. People know hard work will help them achieve their goals. You and I have learned these lessons through life experience, either our own, or from people who have gone through the trials and tribulations of this life themselves. The difference you and I might experience though is the lack of happy endings. The good guy doesn't always win. Sometimes your hard work and sweat go to someone else's glory. The world can be a cruel and harsh place where even the most cheerful personality can be stamped into despair and dismay. The harsh realities of life often create cynical people who guard their hearts against the positivity.

However, stories have a way of shedding the layers of protection you and I place around our hearts and minds, they weave a tapestry that captures the imagination. In His parable of the Sower, Jesus doesn't use fantastic characters or an amazing production studio. And yet, the parable of a simple sower sums up the entire cosmos and the state of the people that were created.

[Seed, Sower, Ground]

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus is sitting out on a boat in front of a crowded beachfront. He has what every speaker wants: a ready and willing audience who desire to hear. Jesus never wasted an opportunity to teach, in fact, if you get right down to it, almost all of Jesus' words were a lesson to the people Jesus would save. For the crowd that day, Jesus could have performed many miracles, called down fire from heaven, created a storm, or bring down legions of angels around him. Instead, Jesus talks about a farmer. And by all accounts, not a very good one.

Let's take a look.

Let me begin by saying that I am no farmer. My understanding is therefore limited and nowhere close to even a hobbyist. However, from the opening lines, I get the impression that this farmer might be about my speed. "***A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the rocky path, and birds came and devoured them.***" We've established that I'm not an expert, but this seems like some lazy or just downright bad farming. Our Farmer continues, "***Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.***" This farmer sees a slight improvement here. At the very least there's some progress in his work, but that progress comes to nothing in short order. The following seeds do even worse, falling in the thorns and being choked out. It isn't until the final seeds that the audience hears the farmer might know what he's doing. Some fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The end.

Is this Jesus leaving the crowd wanting more? There isn't a satisfying conclusion to this story. Who's the main character? What's the moral of the story? If you're like me when I first heard the parable, you're probably confused. Of course, if you're a Christian hearing this parable now, you probably have a good idea of what the point is. At least, you and I like to think so.

[Us and *Them*]

In the following verse, the disciples ask Jesus, “Why do you speak to *them* in parables?”. The arrogance is ironic, but since you and I tend to think like the disciples perhaps I shouldn’t be too hard on them. Arrogant is a strong word, but notice their question, they want to know why Jesus is speaking to those *other* people in parables. Jesus’ response is that the disciples have been *given* to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. They didn’t figure it out themselves, nor did they earn it through any form of perseverance, hard work, and diligence.

You and I relate to them though. How often do you hear the Word of God misused and abused, either to fit someone’s agenda or to discredit the faith you were baptized into? Throughout history, sinful people have used the Word of God to justify their own sinful desires turning words that are meant to be lifesaving into self-serving.

You and I would be in the same boat if it weren’t for the Holy Spirit. Sinful people that we are, you and I would have easily been reduced to using the words and works of Jesus Christ for our own benefit. Only by the Grace of God are you and I able to even begin to understand the depths of this wondrous love. When we read a parable like this then, it can be dangerous for you and me to believe that “we get it”. What may seem like a simple parable about farmers, seeds, soil, thorns, and all manner of growth is a parable about the Kingdom of God. I would be ashamed of myself to say that I fully comprehend the Kingdom of God. I need to hear this parable; I need to be taught by Jesus what this means.

The Holy Spirit is constantly at work in our lives and so our approach to scripture should be based in humility. Christ is first and foremost speaking to the crowd on a beach, but he’s also speaking to his disciples who believe the message is for others, just like he’s speaking to you today.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The Sower is sowing.

[The Sower]

What seems like a simple farmer is so much more. He isn't lazy or inept, he's determined. Because no matter what, the sower is still sowing. He casts out seed everywhere so that there might be a yield of crops. If we had to cast out who is who in the parable, you and I have to be fair and say this isn't us. You and I might constantly try and share the word of God, but we give up. You lose the energy. I don't maintain the focus. This role is better suited for Christ. Christ never gave up on humanity. Christ was constantly speaking to the people who would betray him, teaching them. He called Judas to serve alongside of him, converted Saul to Paul, and brought sinful people like you and me to bear fruit. The Gospel is the seed, Christ the Sower, you're the fruits of this labor.

But that isn't the end of the story.

[Let him hear]

Christ doesn't leave his audience on a cliff-hanger. The story simply doesn't end. The grain produces, some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. The grain doesn't just die. The grain produces. The process continues. The Church is the vehicle through which Jesus Christ, the Sower, casts out seed. Because Jesus desires all to be saved, He continues casting out the Gospel even though mankind doesn't deserve it. It's how Christ reached out to you. It's how the Spirit worked through you and me. That Gospel promise that Christ died and rose again for the sins of all mankind. You and I are privileged to share this Gospel with our friends, our neighbors, and our coworkers knowing full well it isn't up to us to cause faith to grow. God gives the growth. But the Gospel must be proclaimed, so all may hear. It's more than a story. It's life.

Our Sower is always sowing

So be it. Amen.

As followers of Christ, "Keep loving one another earnestly

And show hospitality to one another without grumbling." AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)
