

“The Sower Went out to Sow” by Pastor Steve Sommerer
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost July 12, 2020

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The sermon text is from Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 previously read.

Modern farming would be unrecognizable to someone a century ago. The basics don't change: plant good seed; pray for rain. But technology has made things so efficient, with GPS-guided tractors planting the right amount of seed in exactly the best places. The profit margin is so narrow, nothing can go to waste.

In our text, Jesus talks about a different kind of farmer or sower. Jesus was the One who planted the seed. He invited sinners to be saved through faith. And, today God the Holy Spirit still sows the seed of salvation through the preaching of the Gospel. God sows the seeds of His love as the Church carries out the Great Commission: “*Go and make disciples, baptizing... and teaching...*” But knowing how valuable the seed is – how precious is Christ's blood-bought redemption – we cringe to imagine the seed being thrown haphazardly hither and yon. You wouldn't plant your garden this way – to say nothing of a farmer planting a large field.

But that's God the Sower with His saturation sowing. The Sower covers all the soil, good and bad, even rocky paths. God doesn't need GPS. God could direct His Word of Life to exactly and only those who would bear fruit. He knows the seed that will be eaten by birds and choked by thorns... the ground that will remain useless and damned. God wants to be heard, even by those who reject Him and die in unbelief. God's grace is for all, and, thankfully all means you and me, too. Ezekiel 33 says, “*As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that they turn from their ways and live.*” 2 Corinthians 5 says, “*Christ died for all.*”

From Matthew 13 we read: “*A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up.*” It's surprising how much damage birds can do to a farmer's field. If you've ever seen a field covered with snow geese, you get the idea. The birds flock for an easy meal where the tractors are planting the seed.

The devil is like that flock of geese trying to snatch up the newly planted seed. The devil swoops in to do his worst precisely in God's Church where God's Word is being sown – where God's children are learning about Christ the Savior. He's busier in this place than anywhere else, busier in the Christian home than anywhere else, trying to keep the Gospel of Christ from taking root in our hearts. The devil loses when the most important priority in His Church and the Christian home is Christ.

The devil hates it when you sit down to read God's Word. He doesn't mind you hearing a sermon, but he wants you worried about how long it is. The devil loses when individuals and families worship together in church and in home, when pastors and parents preach Jesus the Savior. 2 Timothy 3 says, “*The Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise to salvation.*” The devil wants to devour God's seed.

God's Word tells us these are the last days. One characteristic of the Last Days is that people will be distracted, always allowing temporary desires to eclipse eternal priorities. What an unimaginable blessing would result were we to recommit ourselves daily to "*reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting the Word of God.*"

Pray for God to give Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church opportunity and faithfulness to sow the seed courageously... that God would raise up servant hearts to teach and volunteer in church or Sunday school or preschool. Pray for Pastor Meeker and Deaconess Lorna and for our LCMS congregations around the country. Pray God call men into His ministry and that the Word take root. And pray for courage to speak when the opportunity comes with family or friends.

Dear people of God, be fearless and uncompromising as you stand for God's truth. There is no compromise with the devil or falsehood. Good sowers resist dumbing down God's Word or softening the rough edges. God's seed is the whole counsel of God. Church isn't about creating a feeling, and we can't give the impression that the holiness of Almighty God, before whom Moses removed his sandals and bowed his head, can be easily blended with our culture. Rather, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" To lose the fear of God is finally also to lose the joy in His mercy that sows seeds so generously.

Next, Jesus describes those who hear the Word, receive it with joy, yet having no roots, they fall away in time of persecution. Cancel culture isn't a new thing. Biblical integrity has always had a cost. 2 Timothy 2 says, "*Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted.*" Acts 14:22 says, "*Through many tribulations we enter the Kingdom of heaven.*" Those not deeply rooted in God's Word wilt and wither under sadness and suffering. It's hard to stand with God when your classmates and even family members have left the faith. Some of life's hardships are self-inflicted – the results of our sinful choices or poor decisions, some hardships are outside of our control. But always remember, nothing is outside His control. In faith, cling to Jesus' promise, "*I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart I have overcome the world.*"

The third seed in our parable sprouts but never grows to maturity and fails to bear fruit to eternal life. It's an unspeakable tragedy when those in whom God the Holy Spirit has planted the Word of Life refuse to allow that Word to grow and flourish, starving their faith. Confirmation instruction was never intended to be an end or goal for its own sake. It gives the elementary tools for a life of growing in God's Word. It's the ABC's that are foundational for what follows. God calls us to "*read, mark, learn and inwardly digest*" the heavenly seed of His Word all our lives. Psalm 119 says, "*I have stored up Your Word in my heart... Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*" Child-like faith is the saving faith that rest in Jesus' work alone. Childish faith is a flabby hodgepodge of half-truths and personal opinions that blows with the winds.

Jesus' parable is a mighty reminder for those who think God's Word unimportant In Luke 11 Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!*"

The seed that produces 30,60 and 100 fold stands for those who hear and receive the promise of God's love and forgiveness in Christ, believing God's Word of truth. But why the difference? Are some just better than others, better ground for God's seed to take root? Jesus again explained to the disciples: "*To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.*" There's one reason some go to hell – they reject the

Word of life. Likewise, there's one reason some are saved, "*To you it has been given.*" Salvation has been given. It's a gift of God's grace, and only God's undeserved love, that His Word brings us to faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. God wants everyone to be saved through faith in Jesus. The Sower sows His Word to every corner of the earth.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus, God promises in our Old Testament lesson His Word never returns void, but accomplishes His purpose. God's Word is being sown this morning, a Word of warning and call to repentance, but also a Word of life and grace. Not only is Jesus the Sower who sows the Word, but John 1 says, He is the "*Word who became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.*" He took human flesh with you and your salvation in His heart, so you could live eternally with Him in heaven. There's not one thing Jesus left undone in His saving mission. God's Words are always and only true, and Jesus planted His seed Word into your life when you were baptized. At His altar, He waters and nourishes His seed, "*This is My body and blood for you for the forgiveness of sins.*"

Our promises are pretty flimsy, but not when God plants the seed of His Word! Cling to the Baptismal water and Word the Holy Spirit used to give you His life. Here in God's watery Word is something outside of you – something firm you can hold on to. Don't let the devil snatch it away as he tries to force you back on your feelings and your results. Cling to the seed promise that "*You were buried with Christ through Baptism into death and raised with Him to new life.*" His Word is never false. He never lies or misleads. Don't retreat from God's strong sure promises, sifting the soil of your heart for evidence. Take God at His Word: "*Whoever comes to Me,*" Jesus said, "*I will never cast out.*"

Don't waste your time taking personal soil samples each day. Honesty, will compel you to admit, it's pretty lousy ground. Rather, focus on the gracious God who recklessly and widely sows His love in Christ, and focus on the Word "*which accomplishes His purpose.*" What He's said before is still true: You are loved; You are precious to Him; and "*no one can snatch you from God's hands.*" Amen.

And now may the peace of God which surpasses human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.