

Sermon on **Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** for 7<sup>th</sup> Weekend after Pentecost

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*“That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.*

*Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many parables, saying: “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. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”*

*“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”*

**“Plant Seeds of God’s Word.”**

- 1. On Hard Soil.**
- 2. On Rocky Soil.**
- 3. On Thorny Soil.**
- 4. On Good Soil.**

**5. Thank God for Good Seed to Sow and Pray for Good Soil.**

It had been a busy Sabbath as Jesus and his disciples made their way to town. The Pharisees were challenging Jesus. His disciples ate grain as they passed by some fields and they balked. In the synagogue, Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath, and they rejected Jesus and even plotted how they might kill him. Jesus answered their challenges with God’s Word, but they rejected. Jesus left and healed many in the crowd. Jesus healed a man who was demon possessed - blind and mute. Now he could see and speak. The people were amazed. The disciples took it all in.

The Pharisees rejected him, but asked for a sign. Jesus predicted his death and resurrection. Jesus went out and sat by the lake. So many crowded around him that he got out in a boat and pushed out a bit and sat and taught them while the large crowds stood on the shore and listened. What would get you to stop and listen like that? Stop and listen today and learn from Jesus Christ. Then **Go and Plant Seeds of God’s Word.**

Jesus taught in parables – an earthly story with a heavenly or spiritual meaning. Not everybody got the meaning, or rather didn’t want to hear the meaning. But by God’s grace some did. Jesus pictures for us a farmer who went out to sow seed and the seed fell in all different places. What happened to the seed reveals how people will react to God’s Word as we sow it. The seed is God’s Word.

You share God’s Word – the message about Jesus with your child, your friend, a parent or co-worker, your spouse, a stranger. What will happen? You can’t always tell what kind of soil is there. But **You Plant seeds of God’s Word. On Hard soil.** Some will reject it, not want to hear it. They’ll say it doesn’t make sense, or they don’t want it to make sense, that it’s for fools, a crutch for the simple minded who do not want to think, a way for others to control you. They may give substitutes like evolution, popular theories, or just bring up a lot of hard questions or seeming contradictions. They may be antagonistic or silently wait you out until you get tired of sharing. The devil loves this – the bird that takes the seed away. It hurts, but it’s what happens. The Pharisees didn’t want Jesus’ words. So also, at least at this point, your friend, your co-worker might not want it. Do we force them. No. **We plant the seeds of God’s Word.** We water. We fertilize. God takes care of the results. If someone remains this way, they sadly forfeit the great treasure Jesus has won, and receive hell instead.

**You plant seeds of God’s Word On Rocky Soil.** You share God’s Word, you invite, and some who hear the Word jump up right alongside you. What a comfort and encouragement! You’re excited that they are excited. You can almost see the growth in their hearts with your own eyes. They are coming to worship, hearing God’s Word, soaking it all in. But then you don’t see them for a while. You reach out. You get the sense the joy has leaked out of somewhere in their heart. Was it one thing that happened? Was it a bunch of things? You see – following Jesus – doesn’t mean life gets easier. It means you have true life now and eternally, and are better off, but sometimes life gets harder. The devil doesn’t seem to have to work real hard on the unbeliever. But the believer, the one who follows and professes Jesus has a target on their back. The devil tempts people to slide back into their old ways, their old habits of finding relief in things that don’t last. Like

the sun on a plant he uses a little bit of pressure making it uncomfortable or not as easy to make it to God's house. Why are people making fun of me because I'm trying to swear less at work? Why did that girl dump me because I said I wanted to wait until marriage? Why are my buddies getting mad at me for not getting drunk with them? Why do people look at me like I'm crazy because I talked about Jesus being my Savior. This stinks, and it's hard. I want my old life back. Persecution weighs heavy, and if there are not deep roots, the plant withers with the sun.

You plant seeds of God's Word **On Thorny Soil**. You share God's Word, and what a bold and beautiful plant is growing! Everything is falling into place as it should be, but then the lure of bigger and better things start to grow up beside the plant. Worry about things of this life entangles the plant – will I have enough, I need this or that thing or person to be happy, and after all – God wants me to be happy, isn't that the most important thing? I have this opportunity. I know it may conflict with time in God's house, but don't worry, my faith won't get weaker. I need to take a few more shifts to get what I want, or take some needed time away and I can't make it to hear the Word, and I'm too tired on Monday Nights. And who has time to volunteer or money to give to God's work. He's God. He can take care of himself after all. The thorns wrap themselves around the plant so the faith withers and soon no fruit is there, as God, his house, his word are only an afterthought or no thought at all in my busy life.

We see these all play out in the lives of people, even people we know. It's heart-wrenching. What if they've fallen from faith completely, and all that's left is a fearful end and eternity in hell. We hit our knees and pray for these people and continue to **Plant Seeds of God's Word** because it, not us, has the power to save. *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes"* (Ro 1:16). *"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ"* (Ro 10:17). So **plant**.

Plant seeds of God's Word **On Good Soil**. This seed goes into the ground, the seed takes root and digs down. The plant shoots up. Rocks are tossed aside. Weeds are cleared away regularly. It grows, produces. Faith, like our forgiveness and salvation, is a gift from God. God gives us the Word to share, the seed, and the Holy Spirit works through that Word. **Plant Seeds of God's Word**. God saves through this message – the means of Grace. The Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

As the ones gifted to understand this message we take warning. We don't want to ever dismiss God's Word or his call to repentance. The seed can quickly become like seed on the path that gets snatched away from us.

Don't harden your heart. We want to put on the full armor of God – faith, the Word, his strength as we face the minor and major hurts because we are Christians – sometimes from strangers, but sometimes also from those close to us. Don't get scorched, but dig roots deep into God's promises. We take warning not to let the cares and desires from our own hearts or the world choke out our priorities. We ask – will this hamper my or my family's time in God's Word. This may be a good thing or a good opportunity, but what will it do to my time with Jesus, or my family's time with Jesus? We thank God for planting the Gospel in our hearts. **Plant Seeds of God's Word** knowing God can do this for others too.

Paul was a hard path, persecuting Christians. Jesus was a foolish blasphemer to him, but Jesus broke that heart of stone, and replaced it with a heart of flesh – good soil – to show and proclaim Jesus is the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. Peter had so many rocks in his heart, and how patient Jesus was to pick out each one, working through pride, fear, arrogance time and time again. From fearful denier of Christ to proclaimer who stood in front of the very leaders who convicted Jesus to execution, and he told them *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is not other name under heaven, given to man, by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Martha was letting cares and concerns about good things enwrap her and missed the one thing needful. Jesus rebuked her, and she listened. When her brother died, even in her grief she was the one to race to Jesus and give a confession of faith in him and the resurrection to life that rivaled Peter's if not surpassed it. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, listened, learned, followed and proclaimed, a gift of good soil, writing in the most profound ways of Jesus true God and true Man, the Savior of all.

And you. Jesus came for all these types of soil. He lived among them, served them, rebuked, corrected, encouraged, taught what true love is and what true life is – in him. He gave his life on the cross for their forgiveness and for yours. And in him you are forgiven. He gave his Word so that through it the Spirit might break hardened soil, cast out the rocks, whip away the weeds, and grow your faith. Some will remain the other soils by their own fault, but by God's grace alone, he has made you good soil.

God will help you grow and produce 100, 60, 30x what was sown. Live for him. Grow in him. Share this seed. There are different kinds of soil you will sow this seed into. Thank you have ears to hear. Thank God for Good Seed to Sow and Pray for Good Soil. The seed you sow is the one that saves. Pray for those in whom you sow that seed that God make them good soil and produce in them 100, 60, 30 times what was sown. You are good soil, don't be any other. By God's Grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.