

“Living Well” Devotionals

Matthew 13:3-8 (selected) from the Gospel for Sunday, July 12, 2020.

[Jesus said] “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and...other seeds fell on rocky ground...[and] other seeds fell among thorns, and...other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Jesus’ beloved Parable of the Sower collapses together two of the most critical days in every growing season: the day of planting...and the day of harvest.

In this parable the day of planting has all the earmarks of a disaster: with a reckless sower, wastefully broadcasting handfuls of seeds willy-nilly, squandering nearly all of them on soil so poor it doesn’t have a ghost of a chance of producing a crop!

The second critical day—the day of harvest—reveals a bumper crop far beyond belief. From the paltry few seeds that landed on decent soil-- a harvest sprang up that not even the wildest-eyed optimist could have imagined.

In Jesus’ day, farmers prayed for an “average” 7-fold return or if they were lucky, a 10-fold return, which they regarded as “good.”

But in Jesus’ parable the yields are “off the charts”—a hundred-fold, sixty-fold, thirty-fold....eye-popping, granary-busting, gob-smacking abundance!

That’s because at the heart of this parable is God’s uncanny ability to wring blessing out of disaster, life out of death!

...because, you see, every seed that was planted here had to die first. Or, as Jesus put it: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)

My friends, we've certainly seen more than enough death this year....deaths from Covid19, deaths from the brutality of racism, deaths caused by climate change, deaths from poverty and hopelessness.

And what are we doing here in our Eastern ND Synod? We're getting ready for an all-digital synod assembly under the theme "Living Well."

What gives us such nerve—to lay plans for the future of God's mission in and through our Eastern ND Synod?

Ours is the audacity of this crazy Sower in this parable—an audacity that springs forth from God's surprising success at always bringing blessing out of disaster, life out of death.

Five weeks from now, at our Synod Assembly we'll sow all sorts of seeds: a mission plan for the year ahead, a new bishop to shepherd us through this uncertain time, and a recommitment (in the words of our synod's mission statement) to live in love as we serve, equip and challenge God's people.

Five weeks from now we'll muster the wild, audacious vision of the Sower....flinging seeds far and wide, boldly trusting that whenever a seed falls into the earth and dies, God will raise it up to bear a super-abundant harvest.

And that, my beloved ones, is what makes it possible in these challenging days to Live Well--in the blazing light of Christ, who makes us and all things new.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.