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Isaiah 55:10-13
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I don't know much about farming, but what I do know is very important – if you want to grow anything. I know you must have the right seed to grow the kind of crops you want. I know that the kind of ground you plant in has an effect on the way the seed grows. The climate is important as well. There's got to be the right amount of water and the right amount of sun. I also know that it matters how good the seed is. My in-laws plant a huge garden every year. They have seed that is old and seed that is new. They tell me that the old seed does not work as well as the new. All these things matter. These are the things you need to know if you are going to plant a garden – have a productive farm.

Besides this, we need fertilizer. We find the right kind of nutrients to make the crop grow bigger and faster. Those who plant want the field to produce. They are on a quest to be more effective farmers every year so that the yield is large enough to pay for expenses – to make a little money.

Do those who sow the seed of the Word of God – such as preachers -- do the same thing? Maybe they should. Maybe they should find new ways to make the Word of God more effective. (Descend the pulpit) Perhaps if the pastor would walk around a bit during the sermon – come down and stand in the midst of the people – get real close to them. Maybe if he were to show pictures. People are visual learners. They need to see pictures of a farm or something else to understand how God's Word is like seed that is planted and does not return to Him empty. Or maybe, the pastor just walks around and does whatever he wants because he thinks he can do whatever he wants and doesn't care what anyone thinks. Maybe he walks around and shows you pictures because it is what you would have least expected from your pastor who is sowing the Word of God in the midst of the congregation today.

But maybe, all this walking around makes you uncomfortable – because maybe I'm going to come right up to someone and ask them a question in the middle of the sermon and you won't know the answer (I wouldn't do that. Or would I?). Maybe it makes you uncomfortable because you kind of see something like I'm doing right now as a bit “gimmicky” and you wonder, “Is this how it's going to be now? Is not the Word of God, spoken from the Bible and from the Pulpit effective in and of itself? Pastor, haven't you taught that God's Word is sufficient – it goes out and accomplishes that which He purposes and will succeed in the thing for which it was sent? Isn't that what Isaiah said? Shouldn't we trust in that? (Ascend the pulpit)

Yes. But we don't. Our problem is that we often don't trust the power inherent in the Word to take root and grow in the sinful human heart; we hesitate to take God at His Word when He promises a harvest. We think that more needs to be added. We think that we can add more of the good stuff. And, that if we don't, then nothing good will happen. Our fears won't subside, our sufferings will not go away. And then when the bad stuff does not go away, we wonder what we did wrong...we blame ourselves, our lack of faith, or even think that God's Word must not do what it sets out to do, like Isaiah said. A bunch of mistrust and distrust dominates the narrative of our life. No wonder the people of God remove themselves from His Word.

The underlying comparison between Word and seed is clear and direct. Rain and snow come down from the sky and achieve their purpose before being drawn up again into the sky. The rain and snow water the crops and help provide “seed for the sower and bread for the eater.”

Similarly God's Word, when sent and planted, never returns to the sending God without achieving results. There is always a harvest.

So, trust that the Word of God will do what God says it will do. I know, we hesitate to think that will be true in all situations. We have the exception to the rule that we are dealing with right now. We have the big one that God can't handle – or He won't handle. We think that even if we pray and pray and pray, it doesn't matter. God is not listening. God won't change things.

What it boils down to is a lack of trust. It affects our relationships. We have seen and experienced the heartache, tossed our petitions heavenward and still the worst has happened. We fail to listen to the wisdom of the book of Proverbs that are to be taken to heart each of our days... that we should memorize and put on our hearts for days like today: "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He WILL direct your paths*" (Prov. 3:5-6). Words like this are especially helpful for pastors who consider Divine Calls and congregations who await answers.

The Word of God goes out and it does what it is supposed to do. He promises success according to His will. It's true, God's will is not always ours. But yet, God is in charge. He sows the seed through you. He waters the ground through His Word. He plants and He harvests. He promises to provide. He promises success which lead us to two final thoughts: There is a need for planters, not only individual believers who can plant the seed but also fulltime planters who can equip the whole people of God for their task. Paul reminds us that people are saved only when they call on the name of the Lord. That happens when they Word produces faith in their hearts. But "*how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? How can they hear if no one is there to preach to them?*" (Romans 10).

Second, God stands behind the enterprise, and He has promised success. The power of the Word implanted within our heart is a source for us to draw on to help us overcome reluctance, fear or hesitancy. The Word living and growing in our hearts makes available to us the power of the Spirit to tell us what to say as we communicate the Word.

Beloved in the Lord, God takes care of growing the harvest. The joyful promise of Isaiah's message is that the Word that goes out from the mouth of God has within it the power for germination, growth, and harvest. God is not the kind of farmer who plants and then leaves his field without water, without protection from the weeds, without His precious Word to fertilize and grow. (Descend the pulpit) God is the shepherd-farmer who is always in the field where He plants – harvesting and caring for that which he grows – caring and guarding the sheep. He is a God "with us" and that is important.

And what brings comfort is that we have a God who is with us when the seed is planted. He is with the Word and He is the Word. He sows and He grows. And He has chosen to be with us – to never leave us. He chose to know us and enter into our fears, our heartaches and our struggles. We have a God who knows us better than we know of ourselves. And if that is true – then no wonder God's will is best. He knows what is best for us and what is best for His creation. He knows and He loves. And for that reason He came to die for us. He came to die so that we will go to heaven. Your sins are forgiven, beloved in the Lord. God does what He says. He keeps His promises. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.