

July 16, 2017  
Sermon for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Matthew 13:1–9 (ESV)

### **The Parable of the Sower**

**13** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears, let him hear.”

Matthew 13:18–23 (ESV)

### **The Parable of the Sower Explained**

<sup>18</sup> “Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Glass half empty or half full? (*Definition*)

Planting a field or even a backyard garden tests one's spirit.

Why plant if nothing results because birds, rodents, insects, weeds, blight, hail, or other bad weather can ruin the crop? However, despite potential failure, an optimist still plants, sometimes year after year.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus compares sharing God's Word to planting a field. Using worldly realism that includes some failure, He calls us to faith and to action. Reflecting on His teaching and promise, our goal is to grow in faith that produces the fruit of the Spirit; including our desire to be planters of the seed of God's Word.

In agriculture if you do not prepare the soil before planting the beaten paths or any hard, dry ground provide an opportunity birds to devour the seeds

Almost any planting is sometimes for the birds! Over the past 2 weeks it has been a challenge to stay ahead of the birds. Last year my tomatoes didn't make at all. This year I stuck with cherry and grape tomatoes and I have been doing pretty well...or should I say the birds have been doing pretty well. If I don't pick them when they just start to turn pink, the birds have a feast. Denny gave me a regular tomato plant and I haven't gotten any tomatoes off of it. The birds are the only one to reap that bounty. Some might ask the question, "Why even bother?" The time, expense and aggravation just aren't worth it!

However, A good farmer or an avid gardener lives in the confident hope of a rewarding harvest. Not every seed may produce, but even just a few are worth it.

You plant it. It will grow. This promise tests our faith.

We have been taught that Jesus died for all of the sins of the World. But in evangelism, many things in our modern or postmodern culture provide open ground for the devil, the wicked world, and sinful human flesh to rob people of the Gospel before it takes root. The path to material success is harder than the beaten path as it pours concrete on spiritual concerns. I've heard from several Christians right here in Bowie that witness the Gospel and are told by their hearers that they just don't care.

So why bother telling anyone? It's a waste of time because some leave the message on the ground, leaving it for the birds to gobble it up.

My grandfather used to say that even the birds need to eat! What if the witness you meant for one man is denied but is also heard by another...a little bird that picks it up when you didn't even realize that they were starving for the seed of the Gospel? So even then, our efforts are not wasted.

Sometime planting involves rocky beginnings!

In agriculture sometimes there are rocks lying beneath a thin layer of soil lead to rapid germination, plants sprouting right up. But this also leads rapid death.

The first little garden I planted when we moved to Fort Wayne Indiana had lots of rocks in the soil. It consisted of three or four tomato plants. Oh they were looking good! I was planning on fresh tomatoes and even had some thought of making some salsa. But there were never any buds and as it got warmer the

plants began to wither away and die. The plants looked good but they never produced any fruit. The following year, our landlord loaned me his tiller and I dug through the rocks and prepared the soil in late winter. Some spring prep work and I had a great little garden the following year.

In evangelism sometimes circumstances can bring an apparent rapid growth of faith, but that growth may lack roots. Have you even been on an airplane when it hits turbulence? We hit an air pocket and it felt like we were falling hundreds of feet. I was praying and I'm sure others were too, but did we remember to thank God when the ride was smooth again. How about when an illness is diagnosed? Someone might turn to God and earnestly negotiate for health. But when the crisis passes, faith disappears too.

Faith can easily spring up quickly but can disappear just as quickly. How about planting among the weeds?

Now I'm not really guilty of that however what I am guilty of is not weeding my garden as I should. The fall garden that I planted in Fort Wayne was doing quite well to. I decided to plant pumpkins along with green beans, onions and even some corn.

They were doing well but then I noticed that a rabbit had decided to give birth and raise her brood under the pumpkin leaves. I just couldn't bring myself to evict the doe and her kits from the garden, so needless to say, there was no weeding done. All of that grass seed and roots then took off. The only harvest that was done that fall was about six bunnies and three small pumpkins. Everything else was choked out with grass as it drew all the moisture and nutrients from the soil.

In evangelism Jesus warns us about worries of this age and the deceiving value of material things. We end up choking on choking on good things as we worry about jobs and retirement. Faith can also get choked out with vacations, fishing trips or sports tournaments or even football practices. Worldly things that are put first and Christ and His church second. It seems that now we scheduling church around other activities rather than scheduling other activities around schedule. When all is said and done, Christ is put into our leftover time while other things take the priority spots.

But we still come back to our first statement. You plant it. It will grow. The promise of planting.

The harvest is to be expected. In agriculture, even though the birds eat, rocks heat, and weeds choke, the good soil still germinates and nurtures plants.

Our time is never wasted in evangelism: God's world does not return void. As the prophet Isaiah 55 tells us *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:10–11, ESV)

The harvest is extraordinary! We are called to plant. We can't control the harvest. We let the Holy Spirit worry about that.

Consider Jesus agricultural example:

*“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”*

In evangelism when we work with VBS and other community outreach like midweek, fall festival, the tasting bee and any other community outreach we are preparing the soil.

At VBS this year we had over forty children in attendance. They sang, played and had fun. But they also learned about God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New. The tilling, rock clearing and weeding has been taking place. Some attend midweek school during the school year and we have had the joyful honor of being the ones that were the first ones to introduce them to Jesus for the first time. They may never hear it at home among the hardened hearts, the weeds and rocks, but they hear it here...and they remember, year to year because they bring it up during midweek. Then the children begin the soil preparation at home with their siblings and parents. You would be amazed at what some of the children tell me. You would also be happy to hear that many of them consider this their church, even though their parents never set foot in the door.

We are tilling up soil, we are removing stones, we are pulling weeds. Is it easy work? No. Is it cheap? No. But is it worth it? Yes! Over and over again YES!

My friends, we aren't going to be on this earth forever, but the evangelism that we are doing right now will produce a great harvest that will go on into eternity!

Gardening can be frustrating. Plants die. Endless weeds demand attention. Birds and rodents may rob you of seed, small plants, or ripening fruit.

Yet, despite the losses, when you pick and eat something like a vine-ripened tomato from your own garden, all the time and effort become worthwhile. If planting seed in a garden can be worthwhile, how much more worthwhile is the planting of the seed of God's Word.

The people may grumble. The devil may plunder, hot times can kill, and worries may destroy, but the harvest is certain.

Today we celebrate the truth. When you plant God's Word, it will not return to Him empty, it will most certainly grow.

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

*S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria*

### **Sermon Outline**

#### ***If you plant it, it will grow***

*Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23*

- I. Are you an optimist or a pessimist?
- II. Is evangelism like agriculture?
- III. The promise of planting.