

Parable of the Caring Sower

I am by no means an expert on farming - I can't even grow tomatoes on my hill up there. But I did live in South Dakota for six years and learned a thing or two about seed drills. As many of you probably know better than I: Seed drills are Large mechanisms pulled through the field behind the tractor when planting. They are designed to ensure that each seed is spread to the exact width from any other seed, and drilled into the ground at the perfect depth. So precise. Then, of course, the seed is covered with dirt so no pesky birds can pluck them up. This is what farmers want. As efficient a process as they can get, and care for each seed.

And then you get this guy in the parable! Just throwing it out all over! On the road, in the untilled soil, where the birds are, what is going on here?

And perhaps that's what Jesus wants us to think on.

Is this farmer Careless? Or *so caring* he will take any plant anywhere? And rejoice in it?

So often this parable is taught in a way as if we have to do more things. As if the parable is just about us and not about the farmer. "You got any weeds in your life you need to prune back?

What's choking out your time to say your prayers before bed? What birds are flying around your life - threatening to snatch up the Word from you? TV, youtube, lust, substances, worry? What's hindering you from putting down roots? Gotta sleep in instead of coming to Bible Class and letting those roots go deep? Come on now. What stones do you have to dig up so that you can get in there deep, beyond 'Jesus loves you' to the evidence, the archeology, the manuscripts?"

Now, am I going to stand here in a pulpit and say those are bad things for us to ponder, from time to time? No. The fact that the Lord uses these scenarios is probably good reason to believe them to be true! The birds, the weeds, and the rocks are set against the Word of God. And who would

we be as God's people (a people of the Word) be to dive into such things alone and unawares?
May the Word, give us discernment in these areas.

And, we have good reason to believe the Word will do just that! Give us discernment in these ways. Because, as the parable teaches, there is a soil upon which the word lands and it takes root and bears fruit.

And if you will allow me a related side question: I might ask, “why are you here?” Now, certainly it's possible someone is here because they want to keep up appearances, Maybe someone else is because they care about someone and want to be nice to them by showing up; or another because their parents made you come; or another because they aren't sure about things and are just checking things out... sure, and in that case, guess what, this parable is for all of you folks here for those reasons and any other! Jesus throws the seed far and wide, he doesn't withhold it, he uses no Seed Drill to put it in the perfect place to AVOID you because you aren't a believer, with good enough soil. No, just the opposite, he throws it your way too! You got ears, hear! Who is this Farmer, This Jesus, is he real? Did he die? Did he rise? If so, he is yours. His care is that he's got seed for you too, might it break into a crack and take root? If so, maybe we should sing a few verses together...

Because for the rest of y'all, is this parable here to put more work on your shoulders to shape up? Or are you here because the Word or the wet word of baptism has come to you already. And perhaps that Word, in you has found a crack, and fell in, and grown up, and born fruit, fruit that looks like, “You know what, maybe I will go hear a good word. Maybe I will stand and say that creed” - you don't have to. No one in the world *has* to say that creed, but you know what? I heard on the Lord's day a few people are going to get to gather and say that creed, and they are going to sing some hymns, and they are going to hear the word of the Lord and offer up a prayer to the

King? You don't have to come, but, you know? You sure are welcome here. Welcome to join the people who have met in catacombs, welcome to join those who commend their children and their living and dying to this Risen King, you are welcome to join this band of folks who confess their sins and turn to someone who is just and merciful. And here you are!

What do you think the Farmer does when he sees the crops going up and bearing fruit in prayer, confession, proclamation, song, and service and faith? I think he rejoices. I think the angels do too.

And notice there isn't room for competition in this parable. We don't get to say, "ha, I am a Christian I am the good soil, unlike those losers." Because good soil on it's own, bears no fruit. Seed has to come, and that belongs... not to you, to the Sower. Through parents, to missionaries, to friends, to scribes, to the eyewitnesses, to the Work of God in Christ. We don't get the credit for that, we receive. But we can rejoice too. In seed that bears fruit, no competition, 30 fold, 60, 120? The farmer, the sower is happy with any in between. When a spouse forgives another, when a meal is served to the needy, when a child is told the Good News, when the gifts of the kingdom go forth – why make a competition out of it, when we can simply, rejoice!

Yes, This parable is a warning and reminder that the word is rejected, yes, it's a reminder that there are things set against God and his word and his people. But it's just as much permission for us to rejoice in God's Work to make His Word grow. It's just as much an invitation that our Lord does not farm with a drill, "those people aren't good enough for me to care about," no! He has a word for them, he has a word for you.

This Farmer is the Same Lord who will, as we have heard and know, will go to the Cross to bear up under strife, the devil, sin, mocking betrayal, and persecution. He knows all about the weeds –

a crown of thorns around his head. He knows all about birds – the evil one there to harass him. He knows all about rocks – people so fickle they abandon him as he is taken away to die – and slam, the rock goes over the tomb entrance... And yet he has taken all these for us, that we might be set free from them, and rejoice in his harvest unto safety, life, and reunion.

Why would he do that if he didn't care? And this parable reminds us he did not just do this for a few elect, for half the world, for those good enough. He has done this for the world! The seed goes out! Whatever reason you might be here for, even if you are struggling with some weeds or birds, it is for you. And yes, he rejoices in each plant anywhere that grows. Even a crop over here in a corner of Idaho. May that give us reason to rejoice!

God be praised for his Word, and the Word Made Flesh- Jesus, the caring and joyful farmer who has died and risen for you. Amen.