

Sermon for July 12, 2026
"Sowing Seeds"

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

One day Jesus was teaching and as happened often a great crowd came. This crowd was made of many different kinds of people. Doctors and lawyers, teachers and factory workers, men and women, young and old, and maybe even a few preachers. The disciples had seen this all before. A huge crowd but many of them would drift away after the excitement was over. In fact, this day the disciples were scoping out the crowd. They were looking the people up and down trying to figure out who would fall away and who would join up. Matthew, being good at math was even figuring odds on who would accept Jesus and who would reject him. Oddly enough, Matthew seemed to be the only one favoring the IRS agent on the front row. Everyone thought the groups from the fishermen's convention were the best prospects. No one thought the preachers or the corporate executive would become followers.

I guess Jesus knew what the disciples were doing because he told them a parable that might have gone something like this: One day a farmer went out to plant his field, and he turned on the spreader as soon as he left the barn. Some of the seeds landed on the asphalt road he went down to get to the field, and the birds had a feast.

Some of the seeds fell on the gravel road. They grew but didn't have much root. So, when the sun got hot and there wasn't much rain they wilted.

Some of the seeds fell in a patch of kudzu. It was good soil! However, there was already a bunch of weeds growing there. So, when it sprouted, it was quickly choked out.

Finally, he got to the field and the seeds landed in good soil. They grew and grew. They had deep roots and plenty of water and little or no weeds, and the farmer had a bumper crop that year.

Now Jesus' disciples understood the surface meaning of the parable. Even though they were tax collectors and fishermen, they understood the concept of how plants grow. They understood how the seeds which fell on the road or path could be eaten up, and how the other young plants would die because of weeds or lack of water. Yet, they had trouble understanding how these seeds were like the Kingdom of God. They didn't understand the parable's spiritual point.

So, they asked Jesus to explain the parable. Thank God Jesus did. There is no telling how many different interpretations there would be today if he hadn't.

The explanation Jesus gave really clears the parable up and makes its application easier. The soils represent the different ways that people receive the message of the Gospel: the Good News that God loved us enough to give his Son to die for our sins. People react differently to this message of love. The seeds themselves represent the Message of the Gospel. The message that God loves us, and that our Heavenly Father gave us a savior.

There are really two levels that we can apply this message to our lives. The first we will call the cosmic level. On the cosmic level, God is the sower. God sows the seeds everywhere. That means God sends the good news to everyone no matter who they are. When Jesus came, he preached the good news for all to hear. He even taught sinners and tax collectors.

You see Jesus knew that for people it is impossible to judge what is beneath the surface. A seemingly hard exterior may hide soft fertile soil and someone who seems receptive may actually have a hard heart. Therefore, Jesus proclaimed the good news to everyone. The Pharisees and Sadducees heard, but most of their hearts were hardened like a well-worn path. The master of lies told them that Jesus was a blasphemer and Sabbath breaker and not the Messiah. That great liar stole the good news. Jesus called Judas, a religious zealot, to be his follower. He followed for

a while, but when times got tough, he fell away and betrayed Christ. His roots were not deep enough because his own greed and self-love got in their way. Jesus offered the kingdom to a rich young ruler who was begging for it. He would do anything for the kingdom, or so it seemed. However, he cared more for his wealth than God. Like weeds, the cares of this world choked out the Gospel. Jesus called tax collectors like Matthew and Zacchaeus. Even though they were professional traitors, they became loyal to Christ. No one would have expected it, but Jesus did, and their deeds produced fruit for the kingdom.

Aren't you glad that God sows the seed everywhere no matter what the soil looks like on the surface? After all some of us were pretty rocky soil, or so it seemed. To look at us, our prospects were not great. Who would have thought about calling you and me to be growers of love? Yet, that is what God did. The glorious thing is that God keeps sowing the seeds. God keeps throwing seeds at soil that hasn't produced before. Some of us have let our relationship with Christ wither because of our business or preoccupations. God remains gracious and keeps giving us love and over time, the roots of his love overcome the obstacles in our lives, if we will only let it.

That is the cosmic level. The second level is the earthly level. On this level, you and I are the sowers. Christ, the master of the garden has given us some seeds and told us to spread it. Some people would think that we should only spread it in the best of soil. That would seem logical.

God tells us to spread his love everywhere, even where the prospects of its growth are not great. When I was in college at U.S.C. I used to volunteer at the Washington St. Soup Cellar. This was a soup kitchen in the cellar under Washington St. UMC's sanctuary. There were some pretty hard people who came in there each day. We would graciously give them soup and sandwiches. Most were impolite and thankless. Some were even rude. One day a woman came. She said she had eaten there when she had no food. Her situation was better now yet she had no money to give us. She gave us what she had; she sang. Her beautiful voice echoed in that cellar. All in that soup kitchen may have been literally lower than the streets, but her voice lifted us up. God's love sown in her heart by our actions had brought forth a harvest of gratitude.

Some would have said, "You're wasting our time on those deadbeats." God knows better. God tells us to spread the seed of God's love everywhere. Sometimes it will be stolen, or it will die. Yet, we should not worry about the results; we should just be faithful to our master.

One day God looked down from heaven and saw the barrenness of humanity. So, God decided to sow some love. He sent the angels to proclaim the word that God was loving and steadfast, but many people refused to believe them. God sent the prophets and many choked them out. Then God sent the Son and he spread his arms out on a cross and said, "My Daddy loves you this much." Many mocked him and killed him, but a few believed. That message of love grew in their hearts and they spread it to others.

Jesus died for all humanity. Not just for those who were religious or receptive. Jesus died so that anyone could enter the Kingdom of God. Anyone means just that: anyone. Not just the ones who lived in nice houses and neighborhoods. Not just the ones who were nice and polite to everyone. Not just the ones who had time, talent, and money to give to the church. Jesus died for everyone - even you and me!

Spread the seed of God's love to everyone. Don't say, "Oh they're not the church type." Don't say, "We shouldn't help them because they will never come to our church," or "They'd be happier in that church with their own kind," or "Their hair is too long." Maybe they won't accept the love of God we offer them, but our actions of love may help them see that God does love them. Spread God's love to everyone without prejudice. The harvest may not be impressive, or it may be. Either way the Lord of the harvest will be proud.