

Holy Seeds on the Sea of Galilee

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Scripture: Romans 8:1-11 and Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Maybe Jesus and his disciples sailed out into Sea of Galilee because the people were crowding them out, or maybe Jesus understood that the boat created a pulpit and natural amphitheater. Either way, from this vantage point, Jesus tossed seeds of faith, Holy seeds carried on the wind to those yearning for inspiration. “Listen”, His voice projected telling the parable of the extravagant farmer who threw out seeds on all types of soil. Unlike the careful farmer who prepares the soil with tilling, fertilizing and irrigation, this sower tosses the seed on hardened paths, dry soil, deep ruts, unprepared fields. What a waste!

Yes. It is an extreme and wasteful practice, if you are a farmer, with limited resources, fragile and expensive seeds and undependable conditions. However, Jesus is not an agriculturalist, not a farmer, carpentry and stone masonry was his background. And, the parable is meant to be an extreme illustration, a radical inversion of society, an upsetting thought. Consider the circumstances at the Sea of Galilee. They crowds had increase, people were no longer hand picked like the disciples. Their motivations ranged from curiosity to criticism. Earlier Jesus mentioned the disturbing rejection of his signs and miracles. Two cities, Bethsaida and Chorazin seemed to have disregarded his teaching and his disrespected his spiritual presence. (Matthew 11: 20-24) Yet, Jesus kept going on, reaching out to everyone, regardless of the state of their soul. The questions probably arose amongst the disciples, “Are we wasting our time and resources?” and “Why is Jesus wasting his time, throwing seeds into hardened hearts, debating with stubborn souls, healing people who never acknowledge God’s wondrous works?” In response to these questions, Christ distances himself on the peaceful Sea of Galilee and tosses more Holy Seeds to the Wind. Listen ! “Sower went out to Sow”

After the parable teaching, the questions remained, “So what? Sow what?” Jesus why do you speak in parables” Why don’t you just tell us straight up? The riddled response in verses 11-16 speaks of abundance and blessing for those who continue to listen and seek to understandⁱ.

Deepening our understanding takes a little digging. Deeping our faith requires time considering the tough questions like, “So what does this mean for me? What difference will this make here at Covenant? Is a waste of time when you teach Sunday school or adult education, take youth on a mission trip? Is it a waste of time to lift God’s Word on Sunday morning? If one heart is touched, one person is healed, or one youth is inspired, the seed is not wasted.

So, what was the farmer sowing? Is this Word of God, a multitude of teachings of Jesus? Are we talking about Jesus Christ himself? ⁱⁱ* First of all, what is the seed? The Word of God may

be as specific as the Gospel or as expansive as Thomas Merton's expanded definition, in "Seed of Contemplation". The quote on the front of your bulletin intrigues me for a couple of reasons. First of all, Merton's definition of seeds expands God's Word and Work to the immediate and the world. Secondly, Merton focuses primarily on the condition of our spiritual soil.

He specifies the ingredients of fertile ground as containing three elements, "freedom, spontaneity and love". According to Merton, these three are cultivated by spiritual disciplines of meditation, study, prayer and acts of mercy.

"Freedom, spontaneity and love"- that so close to our Romans text from last Sunday and this morning, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" **II Corinthians 3: 17-18**

The Roman Text gives us freedom to accept mercy and love through Christ Jesus,

Romans 8:1-11 *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."*

If we really take that spiritual seed into our hearts, how does it change us? Living under the constant burden of unnecessary laws, chokes the life out of our souls. Grace and Mercy gives us the freedom and spontaneity to "love"- Love of God, Neighbor and Self. Healing is easier, when we water and nourish the Holy Ground with Living Water. That same Living Water nourished the Samaritan woman at the well, freed her from years of condemnation, giving her spontaneity to spread the Word about Jesus Christ.

Do you hear ways the parable taking share in your life? Can you see the abundance of growth when we let the Sower parable take hold in this congregation. When we focus on nurturing and nourishing the conditions of our souls, growth happens. When we learn to throw out those seeds widely and generously, the field will yield.

More importantly, when we remember that God is the One who is the generous, inclusive and gracious Sower, then the task is easier. Our responsibility is to become good soil, opening up to the work of God's spirit, through prayer, study, reflection and action.

And, the good soil will yield, a hundred times your expectation.

May God's Word dwell richly within you.

ⁱ »¹¹He answered, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.¹²For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.¹³The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.’¹⁴With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: ‘You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive.’¹⁵For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn— and I would heal them.’¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.¹⁷Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

ⁱⁱ Spell “so” and “sow” for audience