Joy Mission Church

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 13:1-9;18-23

Isaiah 55:10-13

Series A - 2020

 Are You a Seed Sower?

 When my family and I moved from West Columbia to Chapin South Carolina...I was five years old….and yes that was quite a long time ago I must admit.

 My father had just completed our new house...and what an exciting time that was.

 Moving from the city to the country...it was a different experience...one that I would not trade….for anything in the world.

 It taught me to appreciate the beauty of God's creation....developed within me a strong work ethic...gave me the opportunity to ride horses and milk cows...feed chickens and raise rabbits….butcher and Bar"B"Que....and share in plowing the ground and preparing the soil….that flowers and vegetables might grow in the garden.

 While all these things stand out in my mind this morning...something else stands out just as vividly in my memory....the work it took in establishing a new yard.

 To help with that...I remember my father and mother using this device called a "seed sower" or "seed broadcaster"….a hand-held device that one fills with grass seeds...and it "broadcasts" the seeds over a given area….as the operator walks along and turns the crank.

 It's used...when one wanted to spread seeds liberally….over a large area.

 Now when you sow seeds in such a way….they fly out here and there...some falling on good soil and others on bad.

 The same thing happens when the wind blows or a bird makes a deposit….(if you know what I mean)...many times in the most unusual places.

 It's amazing to me too...where seeds will grow.

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 How many times have you strolled along a sidewalk...or walked out to the mailbox to get the paper...and there between the cracks of the sidewalk...or up through the asphalt...is a piece of grass or weed is growing.

 And although such a simple and minor thing to discover....it is at the same time a marvelous discovery….especially when applying it to such a parable….as we hear Jesus sharing in this morning’s Gospel lesson.

 You see...it could be a reminder….that no one ever knows for certain….where something might grow...or where the seed of God's word might sprout and grow.

 Perhaps what this simple illustration tells us this morning….is that we should not be so quick to be certain….about our ability to distinguish good soil from bad...either for green growth or for God's word!

And picking up with that train of thought….let’s get into the meat of the parable from our Gospel lesson this morning.

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  It says...a sower went out to sow his seed.

 And where did he go?

 Well...we would go to a field prepared….would we not…. and tilled...free of weeds.

 But not so with this sower.

 No he just went forth.

 In reading the parable....one has to wonder about the sower too!

 What was the sower doing….indiscriminately tossing valuable seed around the way he did….allowing it to fall in areas….that obviously were not conducive…. to permitting seeds to grow to maturity?

 He is neither cautious….nor calculating….about what he does.

 The parable suggest...that he sows with kind of a lively abandonment….with some falling along the wayside...some on the rocks....and some among the thorns.

 There seems to be a sense of carelessness….on the part of the sower...don't you think.

 Or perhaps his parcel of land was so poor....so interspersed with obstacles to good production....that he did not have any choice----so he simply broadcast his seed about….and hoped for the best.

 Then again....perhaps he had such an abundance of seeds….that it did not much matter….if some of them were lost.

 In any case....it does not seem like a very economical way to run a farm...or to sow the Word of God.

 While all these are possibilities….maybe there is another possibility concerning the way the sower broadcast the seeds.

 Suppose the sower had a different philosophy...a different theology of broadcasting seed….than we do.

 This is...after all...a parable about sowing the **WORD** of God….and not a manual on how to produce bumper crops of corn...tobacco.. tomatoes...or cucumbers.

 This sower of the **WORD** went out to **sow**….not to judge the quality of the soil….in which he did the sowing.

 He cast the seed everywhere...giving it a chance--no pre-judgements...no pre-conditions involved.

 The sower’s responsibility….was to see that the seed had an opportunity to grow----and grow anywhere and everywhere.

 The yield….the harvest....the results of the broadcasting….were out of his hands.

 What was in his hands....were the seeds.

 **And the amazing thing is**...despite the seemingly careless planting techniques of this Word-sower….the harvest was plentiful.

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 **Now it would help us I think….if we ask ourselves here….who is the word-sower in the parable this morning..**

Well….the answer which first comes to mind is…. the sower is God.

 And if this is true....we learn something very valuable here.

 You see....the carelessness of the sowing...and the great harvest that is produced….both indicate the optimism of God.

 God is optimistic you see...because he knows that His efforts….no matter how free….cannot fail.

 God can afford to be careless with his seed....for He knows that even a little….can accomplish great things….that produce a mighty harvest.

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 Now it's often difficult for us….to comprehend this type of carelessness….on God's part.

 We take ourselves and our work….with great seriousness.

 So often….we are afraid to risk.

 We tend not to invest….or spend our money....unless it is a sure and certain thing.

 We look with a cautious and calculating eye....hungering for measurable returns….for all our spending.

 We carefully weigh each situation….and we worry constantly….that we may have made a mistake….and invested foolishly.

 God however….is no worrier.

 God is confident….in his carelessness.

 God knows….that despite the lack of a ready response and immediate results….the harvest will surely come....and the harvest will be a bumper crop.

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There is an urgent need for the word to be sown today.

 Taking the parable out of the first century....and bringing it into the context of the twentieth-firstcentury....we learn who the sowers of today are.

 You and I.

 But what we also realize is...both from observation conversation...is that so much of our time is spent in seeking for or wondering if we have the right kind of soil in which to plant our seeds….that we end up not doing a great deal of sowing at all.

 Then again….we may fail to sow in some types of soil….because we believe they will not produce a good yield.

 The result is....the harvest produced by the sowing of God's word suffers.

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 Let me be clear this morning.

 This is not to say that we should use a hit or miss approach….in our evangelism efforts....or in our attempts to proclaim God's Word to the world.

 Surely it is important….that resources are used prudently and not indiscriminately in our congregations.

 Yet....at the same time….we must also take seriously God's word….spoken through the prophet Isaiah in this morning first lesson....

 **"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered 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 forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."**

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 The parable this morning….is a word of hope and encouragement….to sowers of the Word.

 Why?

 Because Word-sowers experience setbacks.

 Word-sowers experience frustration.

 After all....they meet time and time again....those who are unreceptive hearers....barriers to their efforts at proclamation.

 Jesus and his disciples experienced them too...just check out chapters 10-12 of Matthew's Gospel--immediately preceding this lesson).

 It is all too easy….given those circumstances....to become discouraged....to feel sorry for ourselves.

 Perhaps the sower in our parable….felt discouraged too.

 Perhaps he wanted to say to himself... **"What lousy soil I have!....Just look at the rocks and weeds….this land will never produce a crop."**

 Yet...produce it did.

 True...some seed were lost.

 True...some parts produced only thirty-fold....or sixty-fold….but others produced a hundred-fold.

 The mixed harvest….confronts us with the reality ….that not all our seed-broadcasting will be 100% successful….but our Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of the harvest...and He watches over the harvest….and a harvest there will be.

 Our task does not require us to be successful...but faithful....faithful in sowing the Word….and never to stop.

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 In closing...let me share with you some ways to sow the word….that you might not have thought about in your daily witness to Christ….ways that might be rather unordinary….unorthodox…yet definite ways of sowing.

 First...what if you contacted the company who prints your checks say...and you ordered them say….with the **WORD** printed imprinted….in the corner or across the bottom.

 For instance you...you could put the words...**"For where your heart is there is your treasure."**

 How many checks do you write a month...5?...10?...15?...20?

 You see....people you don't even know….read your checks….and the Word imprinted there….could make a difference.

 It's a wonderful way to be a word sower.

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 Or how about your business letterhead....or your personal stationary.

 What Word of God's hope….could you imprint across the bottom.

 **"Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart."**

 How many times a day....week...or month….do we just stop and delight in the Lord….who loves us more than life itself.

 What a reminder to someone else...and to us.

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 How many carry business cards?

 You might have to ask the boss about that one....but he or she can only say no.

 But then again....it's easier to get forgiveness…. than permission.

 How many times are you ask….for your home address or telephone number….in the course of a month.

 Have a small card printed up....and ready to hand out with the information on it...and of course...a scripture verse that lifts up and glorifies God in some way.

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 The seed can be sown by speaking it in conversation….or a sermon....or through a song on the radio for sure.

 A construction worker who just lost his father….was having trouble focusing on his work.

 He felt helpless walking through this valley.

 Without even thinking about it….he started singing the words to….**"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"**.

 It seemed to give him….the comfort he needed.

 Another worker asked him….to share the words of the song.

 He hadn't heard it….since he was a little boy going to church with his parents.

 The worker obliged.

 On Friday....the man approached the first worker ….and asked to go to church with him….on Sunday.

 The Word was sown through the words of an old hymn...sown into the heart….that had been prepared by the Holy Spirit.

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 But then you might be saying right about now...I can't go around work….singing hymns.

 Perhaps not....but many of us have an answering machine at home…..or on our cell phones.

 What if each Sunday night….you were to re-record your message….and end with a single word of hope or faith such as...**"Trust the Lord with all your heart and He shall direct your path."**

 You choose....but whatever **WORD** you choose ....think for a moment….and consider how many people call your number in a week's time....your co-workers....friends....family….acquaintances ….the repair people....even the telemarketers might hear it.

 Remember....it is not your's or my responsibility to make the seed grow...only to sow it.

 Remember...we are not called to be successful....only faithful.

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 If you have ever planted tomatoes from seed...you know that on the back of the package….it gives the germination time for those seeds to take root….and produce a harvest.

 Some 30 to 60 days...others 60 to 90 days.

 With people's hearts....it's the same….and the **WORD** may take a year or more to germinate.

 But it can't germinate...if it isn't sown.

 So then...our responsibility lies not in knowing what shape ones heart is for planting...but to sow.

 Let each of us be the seed sowers…. that God calls us to be?

 Amen!