

WORSHIP MOMENT

Worship Script

Pat Weatherwax and Jeffrey S. Carlson
for July 12, 2020

Matthew 13:3-9 “Sowing Seeds” Rev. Pat Weatherwax Knm.

“And he (Jesus) told them many good times we things in parables, saying
“Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!”

The sower plants, but not all the seeds survive or thrive.

If you want to read Jesus’ explanation of the parable, read a little further in Matthew 13 or in the parallels in Mark and Luke. It seems fairly logical and self-explanatory, but then I know this parable pretty well. The whole sermon/reflection/message of Jesus’ this day, was given while in a boat, trying to social distance from the crowd who wanted to be too close for comfort. I like that. Wish I could present this from a boat!

Jesus did an amazing job showing the variables of life and faith with just a few metaphors. I’ve heard many sermons about our responsibility to grow and be the seeds that *do* grow to 100 fold. Scolding: Your purpose is to not be bird food! Avoid the thorns, go deep, keep the weeds away. Produce! Pro-duce

We are also challenged to be sowing seeds of love and faith in our world. But seeds come with potential that’s only God given. No one, although scientists try, no one can *create* a seed. Seeds can be genetically modified, but not originally created. Ultimately God is the one responsible for life in all its forms, even the seeds.

Obviously people are the same. Only God creates life. And God truly is the one who plants us. We bloom where we are planted, with potential to grow.

Some of us can plant seeds, nurture them and harvest or admire the plants that do grow. I’ve never been much for plants since I overwatered the plants in our 3rd grade classroom, made a wet mess and truly feared my teacher’s wrath. That was back in the days of corporal punishment. I was afraid and didn’t need to be. I get it, now. She didn’t punish for mistakes, only for willful defiance or disobedience. Sometimes we make messes, without intending to.

In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul uses the same metaphor about planting and growing:

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each

will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)

So, we have differing jobs, planting and tending the seeds that are planted. Not everyone has the same responsibility or the same talents for getting the plants to grow strong and healthy. And not all of the seeds are going to grow the same. Some seeds just won't grow. Some seeds won't grow much, or for long. Some will for a season but won't last. (Not all flowers are perennials, some are annuals!)

Other seeds are going to do well @ 30%, very well @ 60% or even very, very well, with 100% of the harvest being obtained or the blossoms full. This may be under the gardeners influence but not under the gardener's control. God remains as the Master of all Master gardeners. But... Matthew 13:7 explains: "Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them." Later, in his explanation Jesus called the thorns the "weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun" (Matthew 13:22).

Jesus explains that the weeds, and the thorns, are planted by the evil one. The field hands ask: "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, 'An enemy has done this' (Matt 13: 28).

We know seeds don't always grow and flowers don't bloom where they're planted. We get that; the harvest is unpredictable. But, it doesn't say, and Jesus doesn't either: *Why* is the harvest unpredictable? Is the seed to be blamed for where and how it was planted? No. It goes back to what Jeff said last week- there is the presence of sin and evil in our once perfect garden.

There was a song years back, that really touched me, *Should the Harvest Never Come*, a lesser known Gaither song that was based off the challenge to be faithful, by the prophet Habakkuk:

(HABakkuk or HaBAKuk- does is matter?) (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.

The song lyrics are: (CCLI# 637582) *Should the Harvest Never Come ...*

"Should the harvest never come, I still will praise you.
Should I not tie the sheaves with my own hand.
I still will praise you for the promise of the sowing,
And though I should never see it, I know the harvest will be grand.
Should the harvest never come, I will not doubt You.
With joy I'll do the work that you have given me.
The seeds I plant are from the fruits of someone's labor...
So I know there'll be a harvest that I may not ever see.
Should the harvest never come, I still will praise you,
Should the harvest never come, I'll praise your name.

You are my God, the Lord and Master of the harvest.
 And should I never see the harvest,
 I will praise you just the same.”

I feel this parable and these words deeply as I consider my daughter Holly’s life story. She was a seedling loved and planted by God to grow in the good earth. It seems like the right time and context to share a bit more of her struggle. In 2019, my complicated younger daughter completed the suicide that she had attempted several times over many years, from adolescence on, to age 33. Holly was intense, emotionally *and* spiritually all throughout her life. Don’t get me wrong: she was awesome and fun. Like the nursery rhyme: “When it was good, it was very, very good. But, when it was bad it was horrid” .

She was a seedling loved and planted by God to grow in my family. But she was choked by the thorny negativity of mental illness and the weed-like addiction of alcoholism. Those came from the enemy of God, and are not God’s plan for those he loves.

God gave my family this specific seedling, for a briefer than expected time. We nurtured the seed, we watered and cared and tended. Believe me, as field hands we did everything we could, for as long as we could to keep the little sprout alive.

And though the harvest came way too early, and I can’t see my younger daughter anymore, in the perfect heavenly garden where she now blooms, there are no weeds or thorns. I believe without a doubt that God IS to be praised for what joy there was in her journey and what peace we have received from faith, since her death.

“because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal”
 (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Pray for others, those that you know, who struggle with mental illness or addiction. No one chooses these struggles, most try determinedly to get away from the destructive thorns and weeds. Pray for them and also those who love them, those who try with everything they have to help them survive and even thrive. Pray for those who must accept that we can’t make our seedlings change or survive the weeds.

Cling to the truth that we are saved by grace and that when we walk through the darkest valley we need not fear. God is with us.

Thanks be to God.

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PASTORAL PRAYER AND DISCIPLES' PRAYER

Pastor Jeff Carlson

Let us pray.

Strong and strengthening God, forgive us when we trust our own strength and follow our own wily ways; forgive us when we are rocky or barren followers, who listen but do not fully receive your word; forgive us when we are too tentative or troubled to allow your word to bloom fully and abundantly in our lives. Strengthen us to rest in your promise and to live in your Spirit, that as you plant your word upon our hearts, it may take root and grow. Nurture us with your grace and mercy, that we may not be empty, barren vessels, but fruitful followers of Christ and life-giving children of your Spirit.

By your grace and strength, make us the fruit of your harvest, your presence of love and justice here on earth. Lord, we pray for the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect and forbearance may grow among nations and peoples. For those in positions of public trust, that they may serve justice, and promote the dignity and freedom of every person. For those who are ill or injured that they may receive your healing touch. For the poor, the persecuted, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all who are in danger; that they may be relieved and protected.

As we grow in your Spirit, make us one with you, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory. Meanwhile, we pray as Jesus taught us to pray, saying. . .

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.