

## Sermon

Of the Land and Seasons Liturgy  
Spring 2021

The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the eighth chapter.

When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “To you it has been given to know the secret of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that

‘looking they may not perceive,  
and listening they may not understand.’

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, O Christ.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

I don't know about you, but I want a gospel that can stand up to me. I want a gospel that can withstand heavy criticism – my best thoughts, my best ideas, my best efforts – and from time to time when I arrive at this story, I am disappointed. I'm disappointed in the wastefulness. I'm disappointed in the sower. I'm disappointed in everything that's going on.

Why in the world are we wasting seed? I don't need to be a farmer to know, though I do have that background, that this is a terrible idea. That this is more than wastefulness, it is wrong. I know that when I scatter seed I may get one or two accidentally on the path, but do you know what I do with the next throw? I don't aim that way! It's not hard!

Part of this parable pushes me, and it might push you too, to understand why this wastefulness is there. But I want to push it. So, I'm going to take all of my theology, and all of my ability, and I'm going to take all of my Masters of Divinity behind me, and I'm going to fix this parable.

Now, time-out. I don't actually believe I can "fix" the parable. But, let's push it, okay?

What if the parable went something like this:

"The sower went out to sow seed, and he saw that this seed was good.

And so the sower saw the path and avoided it, knowing that the seed wouldn't grow there.

The sower saw the rocks and avoided them, knowing the seed wouldn't grow there.

The sower saw the thorns and avoided it, knowing they wouldn't grow there.

And the sower carefully and meticulously planted row by row, place by place so that every seed had its best opportunity to grow.

And then!

The sower, seeing that he had some left over – the ones that would have been on the path, the ones that would have been eaten by the birds, the ones that would have been in the thorns – he went and gave that to his neighbors, he went and gave that to his friends, and he taught them to be as meticulous as he was. And they look for the perfect spot to plant this.

And there was more than a hundredfold, there was more yield, there was more good in the earth."

Wouldn't that be a parable?

You may look at me and say "Pastor, of course that's a good parable, of course that's a good idea."

Thank you. But, I already see the problem. I already see that when I go to plant a seed, I will always see a rock somewhere. I'll always see the birds circling, I'll always see the sun out ready to scorch. And I may not trust this soil, and I'll go looking for another. I may not trust that soil, and I'll look for another. I may not trust to the point where the seed stays in the bag that I brought it in, and slowly over time this seed rots, and is no good, and I don't have anything.

The danger in looking at this text as wasteful is that we will always be able to find a place where the seed should not go, where we already know the seed can't flourish, the seed can't thrive, the seed can't bear.

And between you and me, knowing that this seed is the word of God, I see this tendency in my life. Perhaps you do too.

I'll always look for a place to plant the good word of God, to preach the good word of God, to proclaim it in action and in word. And yet, from time to time, I think to myself:

"I already know this person's heart; I'm going to wait a little bit.

I already know what this person thinks; I'm going to wait a little bit.

I already know this situation.

I already know this earth. I'm going to wait a little bit.

I'm going to wait until it's the exact right time to plant this seed, because I'm not just going to throw this everywhere. I'm not going to waste my time, and my effort, and my energy."

And what do you know? We can go years without sowing the seed because the soil isn't just right, because the time isn't just right. Because we see the birds, and we see the thorns, and we see the sun, and we think this couldn't possibly grow.

The kingdom of God is like this:

A sower went out to sow the seed, and threw it everywhere.

The sower does not wait for the time to be right, the sower simply throws.

The sower does not wait for the exact right time, the sower simply throws.

And more than that.

I think the sower knows something that we don't.

I think the sower has seen the way that a tiny seed can grow up in the midst of the path. Not all of them, but one of them can. I think the sower has also been able to see the way that water gushes in and fills the cracks of the rocks and breaks them just a little bit, season by season, moment by moment, so that tiny little seeds grow there too. I think that the sower has noticed how the birds may gather most of the seed, but not all. I think that the sower has noticed that the thorns choke out many of the seeds but not all.

I think that the sower wants the seed to grow everywhere.

I want you to imagine a garden. A beautiful, beautiful garden.

A few years ago my brother planted a beautiful, beautiful garden. As he dug up the soil, he realized that there used to be an old chicken coop there. When the owners of that chicken coop had removed it, they filled in that soil with a bunch of trash, with nails and with glass and with newspaper and with all kinds of stuff. He didn't know that. It's not because these things weren't there, but over time seeds and seeds, water upon water, the little microbes of the soil had taken that spot over. And it was good for a while. But more than that, my brother came along, and removed all that stuff, worked the soil again, and it grew even more.

Do not wait, Ben.

Do not wait, people of God.

Do not wait until the soil is right. Throw the seed everywhere. Throw it so that it can transform the earth, throw it so that it can transform you and me. And if you see a pile of trash in this world, if you see the rocks, if you see the thorns, if you see the birds of the air, do your best to prepare the way.

Do your best to create a garden.

But don't wait.

Don't wait.

We have done enough waiting in this world. And the kingdom of God is not one that waits.

Throw this seed as wide and as far as you can. And trust it, trust it to grow wherever it is. Trust it to break wherever it falls. Trust it in good soil and in rocky, in thorns and in paths.

Trust it to transform the earth.

It will.

God be with you if you have a hard time trusting the word of God to bring forth fruit. God be with you if you've been waiting your whole life for the right time. God be with you if you can't wait to throw this everywhere and everywhere. God be with you wherever you are called, and may we see gardens soon enough.

God be with you.

Amen.