



# Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 16, 2017

### Your Kingdom Come

Matthew 13:1-9

Maker Fun Factory props are a reminder of a wonderful week of Vacation Bible School. We gathered each day for 3 hours (the equivalent of 15 hours of Sunday School, or nearly 4 months of discipleship education) to share the Word of God and to be a cross-generational learning and serving community. A few notes: 1) 59 volunteers from three congregations; 2) the majority of those who taught and shared, 16, were our high school students; 3) the majority of the support volunteers were adults; 4) 17 campers and their 5 leaders were off-site most days and on a service day at Northwest Harvest packed 3600 pounds of pasta, providing 11,076 servings for those for whom food security is not a daily assurance; and 5) by Friday noon there were already plans for the next year with the hope for 5 full days!

Remember The Lord's Prayer? Taught to us, it is prayed often in the life of the disciples of Jesus. It is The Second Petition that became my pivot mark this past week, Your Kingdom Come.

What does this mean? Martin Luther taught: "In fact, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it MAY ALSO COME TO US."

How does this come about? Glad you asked! Luther wrote: "Whenever our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that through the Holy Spirit's grace we believe GOD'S HOLY WORD AND LIVE GODLY LIVES IN TIME AND HEREAFTER IN ETERNITY."

Here is the mission of the Church, the work of each one of us---to build the Body of Christ in the world, that others might share in the good news we celebration in Jesus Christ, Then, God's kingdom truly comes and...

1. SEED SOWING IS THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM. The Gospel for this day is oft times viewed as the key teaching parable for Jesus' ministry.

It usually begins a series of teachings at a turning point in the "disciple-in-service." It is, in Mark, just after the calling of the disciples, as if to be their purpose statement in following Jesus. It is the language of mission.

The Jesus Intensive has a huge crowd, outside of the house where He was staying by the lake, so many that He got into a boat and taught them many things in story form.

The pace would be known to His hearers...“Look! A sower sows.” Not much unusual there except “sowing” was the work of the farmer or the laborer. No one hired a sower!

Jesus wants His called ones to know that their calling is to SOW HIS WORD. All else, ALL else is secondary! (Spoiler Alert: Jesus likely see himself as the “sower.”)

The word picture is of one who recklessly, generously broadcasts, throws the seed handful by handful. No real risk is that...no hoarding, doling out, unsure if any will be left, not knowing the rest of the story.

## 2. BROADCASTING SEED --- LETTING GO! (WHAT KIND OF SOIL?)

- 1) Footpath --- Soil where people walk and where the ears of the soil are attuned to current affairs. On a busy path there is not much paying of attention or commitment;
- 2) Rocky --- Soil with no depth to receive. The seed fell where there was NOT much earth, NOT much deep earth, NOT any roots. No deep hearing that gives the Word priority. Oh, hearing might occur, but the cares of the world sweeps the soil away. Couldn't stand the heat!
- 3) Thorns --- Frederick Dale Bruner calls this “choked soil.” The soil of “fatal issueism” which is distracted from the central core of the Gospel and teaching of Jesus. The Word gets bifurcated and loses its central mission, to redeem and to save for life.
- 4) Good --- Nothing complicated here. No conditions like irrigation, fertilizing, weeding. Just deep reception that the Word is heard and NOTHING ELSE matters.

“Bearing fruit” is “edidou.” Continuing, regular, normal action regularly getting the seed in and the fruit out! Let go, give the seed room, watch out! But, note that Mark's numbers go up (Mark 4:8) and Matthew's go down! The point is that all of those numbers spell one word: “abundance” beyond any expectation, faith active in love which gives and gives from blessings and the power of the Holy Spirit!

It is as if all of this teaches that the results of the first three soils, hearings, are irrelevant and the Sowers work will win! God's word is our great heritage and not even the gates of hell can prevail against it EVER!

## 3. GIVE THE SEED ROOM TO GROW --- REAPING THE HARVEST.

Our calling is to leave growth to the Spirit. We are not creators or manager, or, as we will learn next week, not even in charge of weeding. Seed will grow, the harvest is in the hands of God.

The key words for understanding are these---“Let the person who has ears to hear---listen!” This is the code key to discipleship.

I expect in many ways that each of us has been at least one of, it not all of the listening soil styles...and has been in a place of wondering what God, the sower of the Word, Jesus, has in mind for us.

Only this, abundance. Never deficit, less than, because God is the great giver whose greatest giving was in sending Jesus, to die and to live for us, within us forever “through his Spirit that dwells” in us.

In our discipleship we are called to active listening to the Word, to the Holy Spirit, and to each other. In that active hearing, we know what God has done for us, has willed for us, and where God is empowering and sending us in mission.

Beginning tomorrow, our high school mission team will begin a week of living in inner city Chicago. Eight of them taught VBS here last week, several were baptized here, all confirmed and fed at this Table of the Lord.

They will lead a Vacation Bible School in a family shelter. Your support of them has been, is and will be remarkable. They have listened and learned; been affirmed and supported and have served in many places of mission with us.

All of them including four “senior” disciples will have stories to tell, experiences to share, about the ways they were touched in the sharing of Jesus and His love.

As you pray this week, remember them, and when they return with the joy of building the kingdom, listen deeply to them and hear the voice of Jesus who with them, through them is making the world brand new each and every day.

And may this be our prayer: “Lord, make our lives be good soil, listening soil, serving soil, and to leave the harvest to you.”

In Jesus’ name, Amen.