



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 27, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

8th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Isaiah 55:10-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 65](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 8:18-25](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

Sermon Text: [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

The Christian is Planted by the Word and Produces Fruit

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

I've heard this parable a long time, but it wasn't until earlier this Spring that I actually got to experience the illustration that Jesus uses. We put in a new driveway at our house in South Shore. It used to be a straight driveway. Now it's a circular driveway. When we did that, it all got torn up and we never put grass seed down. So the middle of the circle was just a giant weed patch. It looked awful. So finally this year we got there and we got it all tilled. We got it all ready and then three of us got buckets full of grass seed and started walking across that section throwing seed to the right, seed to the left. When we got to the other end, it still looked like tilled dirt to me. Then we left.

We came home and just waited to hear from Wes whether or not some grew, whether there were bare spots or as we were walking along we forgot to throw it where we were walking, all those things. We didn't know anything about what would happen. We just had to wait to hear the reports because we couldn't do anything about it while we were here in Morrison.

So now when Jesus talks about the sower and the seed, I have a little more experience. I've actually done something like this where you just throw it out there and then hope that something happens.

Jesus uses this as a parable. The word "parable" literally means "to place something alongside of something else." So what Jesus does is take this earthly illustration of casting out seed and he puts it alongside of this is what the kingdom of God is like, or this is how things work in God's kingdom. God's kingdom, sometimes we think of that as heaven. The vast majority of times in Scripture it's not heaven that it's talking about.

It's talking about God's ruling activity of grace here on earth. Here on earth, the seed is cast. So as you hear the parable, it's kind of easy to relate to it, I think, just like it would have been in Jesus' day.

But the key thing comes there before Jesus explains it when he says "Those who have ears, let them hear." You can hear the earthly side of this, but the spiritual side of it kind of left them maybe wondering until Jesus later on explained it to his disciples. Then you go "Duh! Now I get it. Now it makes sense." It's an earthly story with a heavenly meaning that is teaching a spiritual truth about the kingdom of God. That's what Jesus is doing here. The truth he wants to teach us is that in the kingdom of God, the Christian is planted by the Word, and it does produce fruit. So that's what we want to focus on, to see what that meant for them and what that means for us.

What I read to you from Matthew, how did that start out? What did it say at the beginning there? "*That same day...*" That same day. We've been in Matthew 10 for quite awhile, and then Matthew 11, what we looked at last week, the end of Matthew 11. Now we've jumped ahead. We kind of jumped over everything that happened earlier in that day. And what a day it was.

Jesus had healed a man that was deaf and dumb. Now the man could hear and the man could speak. Some of the people that heard this and saw this, saw what Jesus had done, were starting to say "Hey, could this be the promised Messiah?" As they were asking each other this and talking about this, along comes the best and the brightest on the religious scene of 1st Century Galilee, the pharisees. The pharisees saw what Jesus did and they didn't want Jesus. They didn't want anything to do with Jesus. They viewed Jesus as the problem, not the solution. They said "He does miracles like that by the power of Beelzebub." Jesus has this long discourse with them about a house divided against itself can't stand and how "It makes no sense what you're saying. You can't say stuff like that. It's not by the power of the devil that I'm doing this, that I'm casting out demons and healing and all those things." He gets attacked from people he was used to getting attacked from. So he goes into houses and starts teaching and healing and doing different things, Jesus type things.

All of a sudden a report comes in, whispering I suppose into the gathering, that Jesus' mother and brothers are here. Family reunion time. This should be really good, right? Except the report comes in that they are there because they wanted to take charge of Jesus because they thought he was out of his mind. Friends, foes, everyone was kind of attacking Jesus. If it's me, I'm calling it a day. I had to deal with the pharisees, I had to deal with my own relatives that think I'm nuts, I'm going to keep doing stuff? I'm done! But not Jesus.

He goes out. He leaves the house and gets to the shore and wants to start teaching some more. There is such a crowd there that he gets into the boat and pushes out a little way from shore so that he has this natural amplifier of talking across the water to the people. He spends the rest of the afternoon teaching a bunch of truths about the kingdom and truths about the parables. It's an amazing thing that our Savior does, and

he never seems to tire of sharing the message and trying to reach people and trying to lead people into a relationship with him. So he tells the parable that is pretty easy, I think, to understand.

Sometimes we throw seed down on the path and it doesn't get into the soil at all. The birds come and eat it and it's gone. Sometimes it sprouts up right away, but then when the sun comes out and because the root system is so shallow, it gets burnt up, scorched up, dries up and dies. Sometimes it grows up real nice, but then the weeds come and choke out the plant. The plant dies a slow death. Sometimes it grows and produces all kinds of seed for the sower and food for the eater. It's pretty straight forward. There are different receptions to the seed. Different things happen.

Then he tells his disciples that the seed is the message about the kingdom of God. The message about the kingdom of God is the good news about Jesus. That he is the promised Messiah. What the people earlier in the day had said, they were right. They might not have had what that Messiah meant yet, but he was the one Isaiah and the prophets had talked about. He lived perfectly. He died as the punishment for sin. He was proclaiming the kingdom of God had come near, that God's ruling activity was there among them in Jesus.

Think about everything that had happened that day and why Jesus starts with this parable. If you're one of the crowd and one of the best and the brightest comes along and says "He's doing this by Beelzebub," what do you think? Do you think he's the Son of God? Do you think he's the promised Messiah? Or is there a little doubt creeping in? Then later in the day, maybe you're hanging around just to see what is going on and you see his own family coming in and saying "We better take care of him because he's just nuts." Can you see this parable now, the sower and the seed, in that setting? The Word is going to be received differently by different people. It's not that the Word isn't powerful. It's that human hearts are at times very hard.

Jesus taught the pharisees over and over and over again and many of them just did not believe. They heard it but they rejected the message. It didn't fit with what they thought, what they would understand the kingdom of God would be. They rejected it out of hand. The seed on the path, right?

At this point in time, when his family comes to take charge of him, many of them later believed. The seed took root later in their lives. We see it. But at this point in time, maybe it was a little shallow. Maybe there was doubt creeping in. The seed that is in that shallow ground and is that doubt going to choke it out? Or is the plant going to survive?

Then the seed sometimes would spring up but then the deceitfulness of wealth, Satan's deceits would distract people, like Judas, right? Someone sitting there hearing this parable explained, deceitfulness of wealth, led him to betray Jesus, then go out and hang himself.

Then the seed that takes root produces a hundred, sixty, thirty times what was sown. I have to believe that happened that day. I can't tell you who and what and when and where because the Holy Spirit hasn't recorded it for us. But of those people there on the shore, I have to believe the seed took root in some of their hearts and they lived for Jesus and served Jesus and produced fruit in their lives and shared their faith and encouraged others and helped others and lived to God's glory in ways that we don't know about. But I believe it happened because Isaiah told us the Word does not return empty. It either is going to accomplish its purpose, which might be in judgment on us, or it will accomplish its purpose of producing faith and producing fruit in the lives of Christians.

If you search the New Testament, you can see that over and over, can't you? The Eleven as they went out and shared the Gospel. Priscilla, Aquila, Titus. Look at Paul. Look at Lois and Eunice, Timothy's mother and grandmother. You see the fruit that was produced in their lives as they lived their faith. They were planted by the Word and they produced fruit. It goes on and on and on in Scripture.

When Jesus explains the parable, it starts to make sense. If it makes sense to you, the next logical question you should be asking yourself is, what kind of soil am I? Where am I at right now in my life? I would wager at various times we might be in danger of having weeds choke out our faith. We might be shallow ground that is being assailed by doubts and uncertainty. And because I can't read hearts, some of you might be the seed on the path, right? You don't really believe Jesus is your Savior. You're here to make someone happy, or you're here to put on a false front. I can't see in anyone's heart. I don't know that. I certainly hope that's not the case, but if it is the case, does that mean you're destined to hell eternally? No. If the seed takes root in your heart and you believe that Jesus is your Savior, he will take you to heaven one day. But know that if you remain the seed on the path, the only thing that awaits you is hell.

At this point in time where you are in your life right now, do you find yourself as the shallow soil? You know your Lord. You love your Lord. But because your roots aren't deep enough in God's Word yet, there are things that cause you to doubt. You know what it's like. We're assailed by Satan's message every day of our lives. If our roots don't go deeper into God's Word, there can be all kinds of doubts. Is the Bible really God's Word? Could there actually have been just the six day Creation? Is it really just that you believe in Jesus and he takes away all your sins, or do you really also have to do something? There can be a lot of doubts that just choke this out. We live in a world where Satan is constantly attacking through his temptations, through our own sinful flesh, and through the world around us. It's going to happen. So are your roots deeper than the attacks? That's the question you have to ask yourself right now. If your roots aren't deeper than the attacks that are coming against you, you're in danger of losing your faith.

God's love in Christ is just too precious. That's why it's something we want to sink our roots deep into because it's something I don't want to lose and I don't want to see anyone lose.

The deceitfulness of the cares of this world, the weeds that come out and choke out time for God's Word, do you find yourself struggling with that from time to time? The deceitfulness of Satan at times can even turn things that are incredible blessings from God into things that we elevate above God and it becomes that weed that chokes God out of our lives. Things like the gifts that God gives us in this life. He talks about the deceitfulness of wealth. Wealth itself is not evil. It's a gift from God. God giving us the things that we have, those are blessings from God. They only become deceitful when Satan gets us to love them more than we love God. Even the blessings of people he puts into our lives. If we love them more than we love what God says, that could be a weed that could choke out our faith.

This is something that worries me terribly at times. God is pretty clear. If we don't keep sinking our roots deeper and deeper into his love, different things are going to choke that faith out. The saying "once saved, always saved" that some church bodies teach is not a Scriptural truth. The whole point of this parable is that faith can be choked out and lost. When I see fewer and fewer people making time to be with God, it concerns me. Not because I need them here, or the church needs them here, but because I'm worried about where their faith is with Jesus. Can they be in the Word on their own at home? Sure. But are they?

Confirmation. Every year, every year confirmation fills me with joy. You see these young people standing up there and talking about their love for God. I hear them in class. Man, they can understand and apply God's Word incredibly well, at times in ways that amaze me. Confirmation day also fills me with some sadness because, from brutal experience, quite often it doesn't appear the roots go any deeper. That worries me. That troubles me greatly. In fact, I can look at the faces in my classroom from last year and I can make a list for you of the ones I haven't seen since school got out. I haven't seen them at worship. Could they be still sinking their roots in deeper? Yes, I suppose. But is it valid to question, are they?

Again, it's not that we need them here or this congregation needs them. It's that we want people close to God. That worries me. That troubles me. And when that worries me and that does trouble me, that's when I suppose I need to go back to the 30, 60, 100 fold. When God's Word is sown, he will produce his results even if I can't always see it. I couldn't see what all those other nameless people that were there on the shore that day did, but I believe it did it. I can't always see the results of God's Word in everyone's life, because I don't see everyone's life, but I trust that where there is a burning love for Jesus and roots that are growing deeper and deeper into his Word and his love, that he will produce that crop of 30, 60, 100 fold, and that parent will teach their child about Jesus, that friend will encourage their neighbor, not with "it will get better" but with "I still love you as you're going through this, and so does Jesus." That we'll start using God's Word to encourage one another and we'll produce this crop, 30, 60, 100 fold in ways that we might not see. I trust that it's there.

So I guess that reminds me, and hopefully reminds you, to know that God is the one doing the work even when we can't see the results. Therefore, continue to sow the

seed. Continue to encourage other people. You and I can't produce the fruit in anyone else's life. We can encourage them. We can admonish them when they're caught up in a sin. And we can point them back to Jesus. But we can't produce the fruit in their lives of living for God.

But we can do it in our lives. So am I going to sink my roots deeper? Are you going to sink your roots deeper into God's love in Christ? Are you going to produce the fruits that come from those roots? The fruits of loving others as Jesus loved. Encouraging others as Barnabas encouraged. Sharing the message as Paul shared the message. Loving as Christ loved. That's what we're called to do.

God produces the results in his time and in his way. That's what gives us the confidence to do it. It's not how good we throw out the seed. It's the One who has put the power in the seed, our Lord and Savior, that produces the results.

By the way, the yard in South Shore looks great, in case you care. That's nice, and that's wonderful, but I'd much, much more rejoice in seeing those fruits of our faith here at Morrison 30, 60 and 100 fold. Amen.