



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 30, 2017

Mr. Rick Muchka

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, dear fellow redeemed:

Earlier this summer I planted grass in the backyard of my house. It was the first time that I can actually remember doing what the image in this parable says. I walked across the yard with a big bag of seed. As I was walking, I threw grass by hand to the left and to the right. After I finished, it still pretty much looked like tilled dirt. I went inside, waited, and thought: Is it going to grow? Would it be patchy? Did I give it enough water? But there was nothing more that could be done. I simply sowed the seed and then waited to see if the backyard would be green and lush or brown and muddy.

Jesus teaches us a parable today. The word “parable” is really just the Greek word brought straight into English. In Greek it means “two things placed side by side.” Jesus tells the story of the sower, and places a truth about how the kingdom of God works side by side with it, to teach us a truth that is important for us to know. He wants us to see that *the Christian is planted by the Word and produces fruit in God's kingdom.*

That phrase, “God's kingdom,” sometimes when Christians hear the phrase “God's Kingdom” they think of heaven. However, that is often not what the phrase is referring to. Most of the parables Jesus tells about the kingdom are about how God rules by the gospel here on earth. He shows us how that rule is established and extended or the effects of the gospel in people's lives. In *this* parable, Jesus is teaching us about the *effect* that the “message about the kingdom” has on his people. God's desire is that people hear the gospel, believe, and spend eternity with him in heaven. That is why *Jesus* shared the message. That is why he commanded us to share the message. But it does not always produce that result.

What I read you earlier in the Gospel started with the phrase, "That same day." What a day it was for Jesus! He had healed a lot of people. A deaf and mute man could now hear and speak. The people who saw it wondered out loud: Is Jesus really the promised Messiah? That sounds awesome! But then the group that everyone looked up to as God's best and brightest, the Pharisees, said that he did these things only by the power of the Devil! Jesus answered their accusation and then continued healing. Then he went into a house and heard that his mother and brothers had come to take charge of him because they thought he was out of his mind. Jesus was getting attacked by friend and foe alike! At that time, I'm pretty sure that I would have come to the conclusion that I had earned a break after putting up with all that kind of nonsense. But Jesus had a different, better answer. He went out of the house, got into a boat, pushed off a little from the shore (so that the water could serve as a natural amplifier), and spent the rest of the day teaching the people using parables. He started with the parable of the sower. For those who believed that he was the promised Messiah, imagine how doubts would have crept into your mind when you or they saw the best and brightest religious minds of the day attacking him. What would have crossed their mind when they heard that his own family thought that he was out of his mind? In that setting, Jesus explains that the message of the gospel is not always received in the same way.

He uses the image of the sower sowing seed. Some seed never puts down roots. It is quickly snatched up by the birds. Some puts down roots quickly, but unfortunately the soil is shallow. And so the young plant dies in the scorching heat. Some looks very promising, but if the weeds are left unchecked, the plant loses the battle and it slowly dies. Nevertheless, some seed puts down roots, grows, flourishes, and produces a crop 30, 60, or even 100 times what was sown!

All of this would have made sense to those who first heard the parable just like it is easy to hear and understand today. But to truly have spiritual ears you have to hear and understand the spiritual point about the kingdom that Jesus is making. Later on after a long day of telling parables, Jesus explained the parable to his disciples. The seed is the message of the kingdom, that is, the good news about Jesus as our Savior. He lived perfectly in our place. He died as the sacrifice of atonement. And Jesus shared this message at many times and in many ways. Some, like the Pharisees, heard it, but never believed it. No roots were set. That explains why they would consider Jesus a tool of Satan. They rejected what he said and what the prophets had said about him. That would be the seed on the path.

Some heard it and believed, but then troubles came and led them to doubt. At times, doubt led to unbelief. It appears that *at this time* Jesus' mother and brothers weren't real certain who Jesus was yet. Eventually for many of them, the seed did produce a crop. But *at that point in time*, doubt or embarrassment ran deeper than the roots of faith. That would be the seed in the shallow soil.

Some people heard the news about Jesus and *believed*, but later the deceitfulness of wealth (think of Judas) choked out that faith. Some lost their faith when it was continually attacked by troubles and persecution. That was the seed in the weeds.

Some of the people who sat on the shore that day heard Jesus, believed, and produced an amazing crop. I have no doubt about that. I can't tell you who did what, because the Holy Spirit did not cause anyone to record their lives of love lived to God's glory. But I am sure they did it. When the Spirit produces faith through the seed of the gospel, he also produces fruit in their lives. We see the results in some of the lives recorded for us in the New Testament. Just look at what the Eleven did. Or search the Bible and hear about Paul, Barnabas, Titus, Lydia, Aquila, Priscilla, Lois, Eunice, and many others. Some of the fruits of faith *many people saw*. Some only *a few see*. But God sees and rejoices in it.

So I guess the next important thing for each of us here today to think about is, what soil am I? Some of you here might be the path. You might not believe at all. You are here today to make somebody else happy or to put on a false front. Does that mean that the Spirit can never give you the gift of faith? No, of course not. God can do anything. He can make hearts of stone alive and beating in faith in Jesus. Just know that, if this is you, and remains you, you will be eternally disappointed in hell.

At various times I think even those who believe can be like the shallow soil or the weedy soil. I have seen it in myself and others often. When we have not matured in our faith, our roots are not very deep. Doubt, uncertainty, trouble, hardship, and all those things can undermine our faith. Does that mean that we will certainly lose our faith? No, but the danger is always there if we do not focus on Jesus more than on what our eyes can see. So, to be clear, *do not underestimate these threats to your faith*. "Once saved, always saved" is not a scriptural truth. Faith once given by God can be lost under these conditions. The devil is constantly attacking. He uses doubt. He uses wealth. He uses family members. He even uses gifts of God to lead us away. If we start loving the gifts that God has given more than we love God himself, whether it is family or wealth, Satan's deceitfulness starts choking out our faith.

This troubles me greatly and worries me constantly. But when I share God's Word in my classroom, I see hearts that love their Savior. But when I no longer see them, drinking in the nourishing refreshment of the Gospel, I worry that weeds in their lives are choking out faith. I look at the faces confirmed each year and experience both joy and sadness. Joy in the moments of their confession of faith. Sadness comes when I do not see them in worship or at communion for months at a time. Can they be feeding their faith at home on their own? Sure. But the question is, are they? There are students that I had in class last year that I have not seen since school ended. Are families having faith choked out by the deceitfulness of Satan? It seems like it sometimes.

But, when this kind of worry assaults my own faith, I need to go back to the good soil portion of this parable. Even when you or I cannot see the results immediately, God is

still working. His love in Christ is forgiving our doubts and denials. He forgives the times that we have loved the things of this world more than the one who made this world. As he does this our faith grows. As our faith grows, a crop of the fruits of faith is produced in us. I have to remind myself, that even if I can't see it, God is at work producing fruit in the life of his people. The parent that teaches their child about Jesus and then reflects that forgiving love in daily life is producing a crop. The Christian who encourages a neighbor that is struggling is producing a crop. The friend that tells their guilt-stricken friend about God's forgiveness in Christ is producing a crop. It's going on all the time in the life of faithful Christians, whether you or I see it or not.

You and I cannot control the crop another person produces. We can encourage them, correct them, and point them to Jesus, but we can't produce fruit in their life. However, we can control our lives. We can spend more time with the message of the kingdom so that God strengthens us. Then the doubts, and the troubles, and the persecutions become something that drive us back *to Jesus* instead of away from him. When we get closer to Jesus, he works through us to produce a crop, 30, 60, or 100 times what was sown. He does the work, and He does it all through us!

So again, what soil are you *today*? What soil will you be *tomorrow*?

By the way, my backyard looked great. The grass grew. There weren't any bare spots. It was tall. It was green. It was lush. And that's all great, but I'm still more thrilled to see the crop that we here at Morrison can produce as we stay close to Jesus in Word and Sacrament! Amen.