



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 6, 2008  
8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 55:10, 11  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 65  
Second Lesson: Romans 8:18-25  
Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

### **Sow the Seed**

Results will vary  
Results will amaze

Are there things in life that you did that as you were doing them, maybe right when you got done doing them, you said to yourself, "That's it. I'm never doing that again." Maybe when you were learning to ride a bike as a kid and you scraped up that knee for the umpteenth time, as the bike kept falling over with the training wheels off it, you said, "That's it. I'm done. I'm never doing that again."

Maybe you got a little older and you had that special someone you just finally screwed up the courage to go ask out, and they kind of laughed in your face, and all their friends laughed too and you said, "That's it! I'm never doing that again! I'll go dig a hole and live as a hermit some place in the desert."

Maybe you got a little older and at your jobsite, your work, you had to give a presentation. Your knees are knocking and you get done and you say, "I'm glad I'm done with that! I don't ever want to do that again!"

There are things in life that are going to be tough at times. And you know what? Sometimes we just aren't going to get the results that we want and that might lead us to say, "I'm never going to do that again!" It's those kinds of times that our God is talking to us about, in a sense, with the parable of the sower. There are times that you and I finally screw up the courage to talk about the Law and the Gospel with someone. We tell them that without Jesus they are lost. What they are doing is wrong and they need to turn back to their Savior. And they don't immediately throw their arms around us and say, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I've been waiting for someone to say that to me. That's so great to hear." Instead they maybe say some other things. And we say, "That's it! I'm never doing that again! That's someone else's job. I don't want to do it."

This morning as Jesus tells us the parable of the sower and the seed, he reminds us that as Christians who have been called to always give an answer for the hope that we have, we have been called to sow the seed. But he tells us ahead of time that as you and I sow the seed, results are going to vary. They aren't always going to be what we want, when we want, and how we want. We aren't God. And if you stop and think about it, even for God the results are not how he wants, when he wants, and what he wants, right?

But at the same time, he holds before us an incredible promise. As you and I sow the seed, God is going to produce results that will amaze us 100, 60 and 30 times what was sown. It's those times, as we see the joy of salvation spread into the eyes of someone who didn't know it, someone who wandered from the truth, then we are humbled to think God let us play a small, insignificant role in it—those are the times that thrill us to the tips of our toes.

I'm assuming that you've heard this parable before, right?—the sower of the seed. Jesus gets in the boat. He gets to a nice place where people can hear him and he tells this parable. You probably know the story and you know the explanation of it, but have you ever stopped to think that if you weren't in the crowd where Jesus was and listened to what the parable of the sower of the seed means, that second paragraph on the back of your bulletin, do you think you would have gotten everything that he was trying to teach when he taught this parable?

The Hebrew people, the Eastern mind is a mind that has a lot more pictures in their language than the way they thought, so maybe they get it better than I would. My picture in my mind; I'm an American, I can picture the play and the pause and the channel and the volume on the remote control in my mind without having to look at it, but beyond that I'm guessing I'm not that imaginative. It's just the way we are. Our minds are a little different. But Jesus uses some pictures that would have stuck with people. And they probably have stuck with you once you heard this because it's easy to understand once Jesus tells me what he was talking about.

A guy goes out and he starts throwing the seeds to plant, right? Some seeds fall on the path. The birds come and the seeds can't get into the ground. The birds come and eat them up and they are gone right away. Some fall in places that are rocky and the soil is shallow. The plant springs up, but when the sun comes, because it doesn't have a good root system, it withers up right away. Some fall where the weeds grow up and the weeds choke it out. You can understand all that.

Then Jesus tells us what it means. The path is the person that hears the Word and the devil comes and snatches it away before he even understands it and begins to understand it with joy, before he even begins to believe. That person hears who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and says, "There's no such thing as a free lunch. You have to do something. It's got to be by what I do or whatever reason. I don't believe there is an after life." Whatever lies Satan has put into their head, they stick to that lie and cling to it so they don't believe. They reject you out of hand, maybe mock you and laugh at you. That happens.

That I can understand and that I've experience and that person I truly feel sorry for. It does hurt when it's someone you love. But these next two at times hurt, at least I think, a little bit deeper because they are people that hear the Word and they receive it with joy. They believe Jesus is their Savior. They see their sins. They see the need for an answer to sin and they say Jesus is it and they see Jesus is it and they are filled with joy. I've seen people like this that are just filled with zeal and told me how they are going to set the church on fire. They are going to do this and they are going to do that.

I always thought to myself, “I sure hope so. I sure hope something doesn’t come up that changes all this.”

I remember when I grew up I saw this happen with a young man. All of a sudden one of the teachings of God’s Word that he didn’t like needed to be applied in his life or the life of a family member. What God had said was sin, was sin. He didn’t want to hear it. Trouble or persecution comes because of the Word. He didn’t want to hear what the Word had to say, so instead of listening to the Word, he went and found some other place that wasn’t going to teach all the Word and said “do what you want, think what you want.” Or even worse are the people that completely walked away from the Gospel. That happens.

Think about what he is saying. Think about how important it is that we have a deep root system. What that means is that we know the Word. We have explored the Word. We understand the Word better this year than we did at this time last year. That we didn’t peak when we wore a white gown and stood in front of a church with a little flower on the side of it and said, “I’d rather die than fall away from God.” If that’s the peak of our knowledge of God, you and I are in trouble.

A root system needs to be continually expanded and continually watered with the water of the Word and the Sacraments. Otherwise we are going to rely on our own thinking and our own reasoning. Our own thinking and our own reasoning just flat out stinks because you and I are sinners. We will come up with reasons why God’s Word doesn’t say what it says. We need to be in the Word and have our root system spread out. We need to encourage each other to do that so that when trouble or persecution comes we don’t fall away. Because there is one truth—we live in sinful world. Trouble is going to come. The doctor’s news won’t be good. The economy won’t pick up as fast as we need it. Trouble will come. The closer we walk to God the closer we will get through it.

If you want to talk about a crop that has produced 100 or 60 or 30 fold, look at some of the people around you and what they have gone through and see how trouble has refined their faith to lead them to walk closer to God. It can drive you to God or it can drive you away from God. Your responsibility and my responsibility is to encourage one another to get into the Word and get deep roots for when trouble comes.

The seed that falls on the rocky places and the weeds come up and choke it out. That is the people that hear the Word, receive it with joy, but then kind of get distracted with the worries of this life. The doctor’s office visits, planning for retirement, chasing after wealth, the deceitfulness of wealth is what he mentions specifically. We all of a sudden don’t say “I reject you Jesus. I don’t believe in you anymore.” But he gets choked out because we become too busy with other things. “I work hard all week. I don’t have time for God’s Word on the weekend or on Thursday night. That’s my volleyball league. I have a cabin. I have to use it. I paid the money for it. I have to get away.” Pretty soon we are chasing after all these other things and the Word gets choked out and pushed to the back—this beautiful message that God loved us in spite of who we are and he has taken away our sins.

You and I know people that are having the weeds grow in their garden, right? There are times in your life and in my life that this happens to us. So when someone comes and starts trying to pull out the weeds and says, "Get back closer to the Word," listen. They are saying it because they love you and they want you to be close to God.

Think about what God's message is for you and me. God's message for you and me is that even though there are times when we have been the person who didn't have a deep enough root system, even though there are times when you and I have been the person who has had weeds growing and choking out that Word, even though you and I have sinned against God and chased our tail or chased something else in this world, God still loves us and has taken away our sins in Christ. Each and every time the Holy Spirit grabs us and shakes us and leads us back to this truth, God says to us, "I love you. You are forgiven. You are completely holy and perfect in my eyes. And I will walk closer to you than your own skin. That's how much I love you." That's what our God says to us.

Think about it. When he says that to you and me and we revel in it and we drink it in deep and we use it to get us through those difficult times, that's when we become, through God's work and through God's power, the good soil that produces a crop 100, 60 and 30 times what was sown. God will turn us into that soil the closer we walk to him.

What does that mean 100 and 60 and 30 times and all that stuff what was sown? You and I may not touch that many lives as we live our faith. We may touch a few. But the people whose life that we touch, the people who we use the Gospel to encourage them with as they go through the other difficulties in life, the people that you and I build up when they are weak, lift up when they are hurting, encourage when they are doubting, the people that we lead to the Gospel, they in turn go and do the same thing. They go to those who don't yet believe. They go to those who do believe. And God produces a result 100 and 60 and 30 times what you and I are. That's why he puts us in the congregation so that we encourage others. We touch more and more lives. You and I need to be aware of how important this is. How we interact with each other and with unbelievers. How important that is. It is a part of our sowing the seed.

In the winter you don't go stand outside, right? After church you go down in the basement and maybe get a cup of coffee. You maybe dodge those little "speed bumps" that run around your legs. But you talk to someone, right? God may well be putting before you an opportunity to talk to someone you know well or maybe you don't know that well. But to offer them the encouragement of the Gospel as they go through difficult times. It's not just about drinking coffee, although that's a noble purpose in and of itself. It's about encouraging one another. That's what we are here for.

As we talk as we wait for school busses, as we talk as we watch youth softball, as we talk at various times and in various places, we have these opportunities to encourage. Take advantage of them. Don't be afraid to speak the Gospel and tell other people "God loves you. He'll help you through it." Because that is what they need to hear and that is what we need to hear.

When we don't seize those opportunities, maybe when we think we are going to pull a weed when actually we should be encouraging, we can really do damage.

I'll give you an example. Someone, I'm sure they thought they were doing a good thing. But it didn't encourage. It didn't build up. It didn't help to produce a bigger crop. Early this spring, I went to Michigan for my niece's confirmation. Another family member came to the confirmation service. I was just thrilled to see him there. Someone that has had struggles in their life and they don't get to church all that often, but they were there that day. He is a younger person, a teenager. The first hymn is done and we stand up for the Confession and Absolution. This teenager puts his foot on the pew behind him, lifts up his leg as he is facing forward and his foot goes on the pew behind him. A little well-intentioned lady behind him leans forward and says, "That's not how we act in church." It's a foot. It's a pew for Pete's sake. Get over it.

Guess what that person did for the rest of the service. They never stood up again. He probably thought to himself, "That's it! I'm not going through this again if that's how these people are going to treat me!"

You and I have opportunities to encourage. You and I have the opportunities to give the parent that has the baby that is making noise the evil eye saying, "Why aren't you out of here? I would have had my child out of here." Which do you think is going to serve God's kingdom better? Which do you think is going to produce more fruit?

You and I have those opportunities. You and I can encourage. There are people that are around us every day that are hurting and don't know that their sins are forgiven through the life and death of Christ. You and I are God's mouthpiece to share that message. And you know what? You and I have failed, but God still loves us and God still has forgiven us and he says, "Get up back on that bike and go at it again and I will help you as you sow the seed."

By God's grace, we get to!