

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday July 12, 2020  
Palisade Bethel Lutheran Church

“Good Seeds We Sow”

Jesus told a parable about a sower who went forth to sow seed. Not all the seed would germinate. Some would soon be eaten by birds. Some would fall among thorns which eventually would choke it out. But some seed would fall on good soil and produce an unbelievable harvest, “some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

I can just imagine people listening carefully to Jesus’ words. “What in the world is He talking about?” they murmured. They expected to hear something profound, something that would add meaning to their lives. Instead, Jesus talked about sowing seeds.

Jesus knew his listeners’ hearts though. He knew some would walk away shaking their heads thinking “He couldn’t possibly be the messiah.” Others would follow Him for a while until they found someone else more interesting, or worldly concerns choked them out. But there were a few – only a few – who would make a choice that would change their lives forever. So, **THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER CALLS US TO MAKE A CHOICE.** What kind of lives shall you and I live? Shall we live only for ourselves? Or, shall we live fruitful, productive lives?

Mother Teresa made such a choice. Mother Teresa did not set out to help the poor. For over twenty years she taught the wealthiest children of Calcutta, India. Everyday, she overlooked impoverished slums and people living in the streets that surrounded well-to-do neighborhoods in which she worked. She was perfectly content with her life. Until one night she was walking home, and heard a woman crying for help. Realizing the seriousness of the woman’s condition, Mother Teresa rushed her to the nearest hospital.

At the hospital, she was told to sit and wait. She knew the woman would die without immediate medical attention so she took the woman to another hospital. Again, medical treatment was denied. The woman belonged to the wrong social caste. In desperation, Mother Teresa took the woman to her home. Later that night, the woman died in the comfort of Mother Teresa’s loving arms.

That night, Mother Teresa resolved this would never happen again to anyone within her reach. She would devote her life to easing the pain of those who suffered around her. Whether they lived or died, they would do so with dignity. She would personally do everything in her power to see they would be treated better than they had ever been treated in their entire lives, with love and respect that all people deserve.

Mother Teresa made a choice. do you think she ever dreamed that by making that choice her name would one day be a household word? Do you imagine she even dreamed how many lives she would eventually touch? Obviously not. We never know when sowing seed what the result might be. That brings us to the second thing to be noted from Jesus’ parable. **SEED THAT IS SOWN ON GOOD GROUND PRODUCES BOUNTIFULLY.**

When Abraham Lincoln met the author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, he remarked to her, “So this is the little lady who made this big war.” He was referring, of course, to the Civil War. Uncle Tom’s Cabin was just a story. Who could have dreamed it would tear our country apart? Who knows what fruit might spring up from the tiniest seed?

The late Fred Herman used to begin his speeches by asking audiences: Who was Jim Thorpe’s coach, who taught Einstein arithmetic in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, who was Paderewski’s piano teacher in the 6th grade? We might

ask, who was Billy Graham's Junior High Sunday School teacher? God promises a bountiful harvest from tiny seed. Sometimes, that seed is sown close to home.

Bill Havens was to represent the United States at the first canoeing event in the 1924 Olympics. But Bill faced a dilemma: his first child was due to be born the day of the race. Bill's wife encouraged him to go, but Bill decided to stay with her. The team won; so, Bill missed his chance for a medal. To make matters worse, the baby didn't even come on schedule. It was three weeks overdue. Twenty-eight years later, that baby boy, named Frank, phoned Bill from Helsinki. Frank had taken up canoeing, too, and he was calling to tell his dad he had won for him the Olympic medal which Bill had passed up long ago.

There are many parents who have heard God's call, but for one reason or another the seed has been choked out by other concerns. But always in their hearts, they know they could have done more. It's interesting how often their children respond to the message their mom and dad ignored.

"For what was sown on good soil," Jesus told the disciples, "is like the person who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Jesus spoke of a tremendous harvest in spite of the fact that some seed was lost along the way. So, we might not ever know the fruit we are bearing. The seed we sow may seem so tiny, but at harvest time the yield will be fantastic – beyond our expectation.

Perhaps you know a story about Benjamin Franklin. One day he received a gift of a whisk broom from India. He noticed a few seeds fastened to the broom. Franklin planted them. When the first crop came up, he distributed the seeds among his friends and neighbors. Their crops flourished. In this way, Franklin was responsible for introducing broom corn into the American colonies, and starting the American broom industry. From tiny seeds sometimes come great harvests. **THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO BE FAITHFUL.** Let me tell you about an outstanding example.

Pauline Hord was a remarkable woman well into her eighties. Pauline was always willing to pray for other people and their needs. Pauline's passion was literacy, reading and writing, and prison ministry. There were thousands of people in her home state of Tennessee who could not read and write well enough to function in an adequate way. Pauline gave her time to work with teachers in public schools, training them in a new literacy method. She gave three days a week, four or five hours a day, to teach this new method of literacy in model programs.

Once a week, Pauline also drove over a hundred miles one way to Parchman State Prison in Mississippi to teach prisoners how to read and write. Pauline did more for these prisoners than teach them how to read and write. She shared her faith with them. She spoke of her love and faith and witness to the power of the Gospel.

Some years ago, President George H.W. Bush started a program called "Points of Light." President Bush wanted citizens to exercise positive and creative influence and service where they lived. In cities and communities across America, people have been recognized for being "points of light." It is no surprise Pauline Hord was chosen as a point of light. An article was written about her in the local newspaper describing her work.

A few months later, President Bush came to Memphis. He wanted to honor the seven most outstanding "points of light" in that area. Pauline Hord was invited along with six other "points of light" to have lunch with President Bush. But the President made a mistake. The luncheon was scheduled on a Wednesday. That's the day Pauline spent at Parchman Prison in Mississippi, teaching prisoners to read and write while witnessing the love of Christ. She would not give that up to have lunch with the President.

Do you think Pauline Hord had been able to see all the fruit she was bearing? I doubt it. Sometimes, it takes generations to see results of our labors, but fruit will come if we will be faithful. God will use the seed we sow to accomplish great things in this world, if we will only do our part.

A Western reporter interviewed Boris Yeltsin. When asked what gave him courage to stand firm and help ensure the fall of Communism in the U.S.S.R., Yeltsin credited the story he had read of Lech Walesa, the electrician who helped bring democracy to Poland. Similarly, Walesa stated he was inspired by reading accounts of the civil rights movement in this country, led by late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King indicated he was spurred to action when he learned of the courage of one woman, Rosa Parks, who refused to sit in the back of the bus.

We seldom know the potential of seed we sow, but is it possible the fall of Communism was partly brought about by one black woman who refused a seat in the back of the bus? We never know, do we? God gives us seeds. It's up to us how we use the seeds we are given. If we water and nurture the seed, at harvest time the yield will be fantastic, beyond belief. AMEN!!

“S.D.G.”

