

The 7th Sunday after Pentecost – A 07/16/2023

If you have planted a garden, this is the time of year that you would begin watching for growth and in some case ripe vegetables. Depending on where you live, it is important to determine when to plant what vegetables. In the UP you have to wait a little longer than probably down here.

Wherever you are planting there will be a different type of soil. It may be better for some vegetables than others. Some soil may need some help, extra fertilizer, and even healthier soil to add to what is in the ground. To have any kind of yield will take work and patience.

There are so many variables that put seeds at risk. Water is needed, but every summer is different with varying amounts of rain. The temperature plays a big role and that varies from summer to summer. We can't forget the animals who like to feed on what has been planted. There are always weeds that need tending too.

When working hard and with varying degree of patience to try and have a yield, what do you think of the farmer who just throws the seeds around and sees if it grows, it grows and if it doesn't, it doesn't. $\frac{3}{4}$ of what is sown doesn't produce a yield.

Would you hire this farmer to work for you? Doesn't this farmer seem a bit lackadaisical? Throw some seeds here. Throw some seeds there. With this kind of yield, it would be hard to make a living. If you needed a loan, I'm not sure the bank would consider this type of farming a good risk.

At first reading, we may wonder what Jesus is up to. Jesus enjoys using parables, stories which may make you scratch your head and wonder what he is talking about. Parables are stories with earthly elements which the people can relate to. They also have a spiritual or heavenly element which relate to how-to live-in God's kingdom.

With this particular parable, Jesus was sitting by the sea and large crowds gathered around him. He then got into a boat and the whole crowd stood on the beach. He told everyone to listen and then told them the story about the farmer who threw the seed all around on different types of soil. This was an agricultural society; thus, he knew they would understand the earthly meaning of the parable.

Now there is a break in this chapter at this point in our lectionary which leaves out an important part. It reads beginning in verse 10: Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" His audience has changed from the crowds to just his disciples. ¹¹Jesus answered his disciples, "Because the secrets or the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven are for you to

know, but not for the crowds. ¹²For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ¹³The reason I speak to them in parables is because they look, but do not see, and they listen, but do not hear or understand.'

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

Jesus is encouraging the disciples to believe that they can hear and see the spiritual or heavenly meaning of parable. There are many who are not able to, and the disciples are blessed to be able to perceive and understand if they choose to. Even though at first Jesus explanation may not make sense to them, they have the ability to understand the meaning of the parable.

First they need to get past the fact that Jesus is always trying to jar people's thinking. Just as I would not hire this farmer, does not mean that there is not something for me to learn about living in the kingdom from this parable. Jesus description of just scattering seed on any ground does not make a good earthly farmer, but when he compares it to the good news of the kingdom it makes a little more sense.

Now what do we do with the fact that the yield was only about a quarter of what the farmer planted. This is quite disheartening. I'm sure there have been years with your gardens where you wonder if you really want to plant the same vegetables, or in the same place or same way the next year.

On one hand for farmers who depend on their yield for their income, success is needed in order to keep their farm going and make an income. In this respect planters are responsible for where they sow the seed. It makes a big difference to address all the risks or variables such as water, temperature, animals and weeds.

When sowing the seeds of the good news of the kingdom, we are called to sow them any place that we can. There are times that we need to be focused and we will seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit to discern that during this next year here at Faith. We will assess what we are doing and if there are more efficient ways to do the present ministries. Also, we will once again identify the needs of our community and discern whether we are called to other ministries.

When it comes to sowing the seed of the good news of the kingdom there are no off-limit places, unless determined unsafe. The point is that this good news is for everyone everywhere. Even though at times it may seem like it may not be worth it, Jesus says yes it is.

The good news for us is that we are not responsible for someone else's growth. We are only responsible for sharing the good news. We may never see the growth, but we are assured in hope that God's Word never comes back void.

As disciples of Jesus Christ we are blessed to be able to hear and see, understand and perceive the secrets of the kingdom. In this passage that secret is that we are only responsible for telling others, all people, of the good news of God's love for them. Jesus tells us just keep doing it, no matter if we see results or not.