

The Law of the Farm

8/20/2017
Y. Joe Kim

Luke 8:4-15

4 When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ⁵‘A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. ⁷Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.’ As he said this, he called out, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’ ⁹ Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that “looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand.” ¹¹ ‘Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. ¹⁴As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

1. Why VBS?

As you saw today in our VBS slideshow, we had a wonderful time with about 20 children. I am so thankful to Pat Frost and the other teachers, group leaders, and helpers. Can we give them a round of applause?

I am sure Pat Frost and the rest of our VBS team put in a lot of time and energy into making our VBS a great experience for the children. Pat made banners and recruited teachers to lead the program. Some helped get decorations from all different sources. As a matter of fact, we still have some work to do. If anyone would like to join after worship today to help break down the decorations here in the sanctuary, I would appreciate it.

After VBS, I spent some time in personal reflection. Why does our church host VBS every year? Is it because it’s something we do yearly out of tradition? What is the purpose of VBS? Is VBS really worth all the extra trouble? I am sure you have your own answer. However, before we share our answers, let me explain to you today’s scripture lesson and let us see whether Jesus would agree with our answers.

2. The Parable of the Sower

Today's Bible passage is called the parable of the sower. We do not know how many people gathered when Jesus was talking about this parable. But the Bible tells us, "**People were coming to Jesus from town after town**" (v. 4). So there were many people that came to listen to Jesus' teaching. Jesus often used parables in his teachings, and he would have wanted to express an important point with this story to the people gathered around him.

Jesus says that a farmer goes out to sow seeds. Some falls along the path, on rock, among thorns, and on good soil. The seeds that fall on the path would be eaten by the birds. The seeds on the rock would wither because they have no moisture. The seeds among thorns would be choked by thorns. But the seeds on good soil would grow up and yield a crop, a hundred times more than is sown. Jesus adds a very important comment. "**Let anyone with ears to hear listen!**" (v. 8).

In verses 9 and following, Jesus' disciples ask him the meaning of the parable, and Jesus explains to them what it means. Jesus says, "**The seed is the word of God**" and the path, rock, thorns and good soil are people.

Why then would a farmer sow seeds on soil that isn't all good soil? We have technology now that allows us to be better at planting seeds in only good soil, but at the time, farmers would often sow seeds without necessarily knowing the condition of the soil. There can be areas where the soil was path, rock, or good soil. And with that image, Jesus gives the image of sowing God's word into the lives of other people. We share the word of God with others, but are often not able to be sure what the end result will be. When we sow, we often are sowing onto not good soil.

This thought came to my mind during and after our VBS. Children are often more receptive to hearing about Jesus and having God's word grow with them as they mature into adults. I've heard some comments that an overwhelming majority of Christians often come to Christ as children or young adults. Many become Christians before the age of 13. We don't necessarily push the children at our VBS to accept Jesus, but we do hope that many of the children experience and accept the love that God has for them through our VBS.

In my personal experience, I didn't accept Christ until I was a teenager. But I attended VBS when I was five years old and still remember that VBS had a big impact on me as a child and influenced my faith and my acceptance to become a follower of Jesus in my teens.

3. The Law of the Farm

Today's sermon title is "The Law of the Farm." The law of the farm is simple: "We reap what we sow." If we don't sow, we don't reap anything. And

sowing itself does not guarantee a crop. Farming often requires continued attention and care of seeds in order to reap a harvest at the right time.

My parents were farmers in a small town in Korea. My older brother and I helped my parents until I graduated from high school. When we had a summer break from school, we worked from early in the morning until late in the afternoon often for at least a month. My parents had rice fields, and my brother and I had to remove weeds from the rice fields every day with my parents.

As a farmer, my father knew the seed, the soil, and climate. He knew when he had to scatter the seeds. He had a detailed farming plan. I learned that in farming there are no shortcuts. A farmer can't expect to reap a crop by cramming to catch up. Everything is time and work sensitive. And everything is done with the future in mind. Like in farming, many times success in life also comes from planning, having goals, regular daily effort, and patiently waiting for the results.

4. The Importance of Planning

VBS requires planning. Last year when the 2016 VBS was over, we talked about the 2017 VBS. As farmers have plans for their future, each individual and each church also needs a plan for the future. A Chinese proverb says, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now." If we do not plant a tree now, we can't expect fruit in the future. Too often we delay planning for our future. However, the best time to plan for our future is right now.

Last week, I received a letter from a local funeral home. The letter says, "Before I die, I want to go to Europe, own a convertible, visit a lighthouse, go skydiving, and make my own funeral arrangements." They remind me that I will need to make my funeral arrangements soon. It is so true for everyone that we need to have plans for our future. It will also be true for the church.

5. The Future of Our Church

Wherever I went to serve a church, quite often I thought about the future of the church. These days I seriously think about the future of our church. If the Rev. W.C. Darby and the congregation had no plan for the future of our church in 1910, this beautiful stone church building would not exist here today. They were like farmers who expect a crop in the fall. Just thinking about the future is not good enough. We need to make a specific plan. We need to identify the right goals, develop our written plan to reach those goals, and implement the action steps to attain those goals.

There is a question in the restroom downstairs. It says, “**What’s your vision for Swift Memorial?**” I don’t know who put it there, but whenever I see it, I often am reminded that God asks this question to you and me.

My vision for our church is that everyone in this area can say that Swift Memorial is their church. Even for those who don’t come to church on Sundays, I pray that the people in our community feel the warmth of God’s love through us. And I hope that our church is encouraged daily when we are sowing into the lives of our families and those around us.

6. Conclusion

Let me go back to the question I asked at the beginning. Why did we host our 2017 VBS this year? We hosted our VBS because we are sowers of God’s word in the lives of our church and our community. Just like the parable of the sower, we are called to sow into the lives of those around us. We are called to sow and care for the lives in our community just like farmers of God’s kingdom. Our children are good soil, and I’m sure that many of the children who came to our VBS this past year will be impacted by the love and the investment that our church has made into their lives. We taught and showed them the love and the transforming grace of God. The children of our community just like all of us, need to know who Jesus is and that they are created for a reason.

7. Application

Ecclesiastes 3 says, “***There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born...and a time to plant***” (Eccl. 3:1-2). For farmers, having a farming plan is so important. Farmers need to prepare, to sow when it is the right time, and to continue farming until the harvest is ready.

Farmers need to keep in mind though what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, “***I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.***” As long as we do our job of planting and watering, God will make our church grow.

God calls us to sow the seed for a great harvest. I get excited about our future when I imagine what amazing things God will do through the small seeds of faith that we sow now. I pray that you also become excited when you listen to today’s presentation after the worship service. Thanks be to God for giving us the privilege to sow the seed of God’s love in Jesus Christ. Amen.