

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23 Parable of the Sower: Love “on the fly”

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 He who has ears, let him hear." ... 18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. 22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. 23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

I received a flyer in the mail that was covered with questions about God. People in our world are seeking answers.

- Does God love me? ... Does he care about all the other individuals who occupy this big spinning ball of dust?
- Does he want all of us to know him? (Does he want us to end up with him?)
- Why are so many so lost and confused about God?

Some of the deep, probing questions people ask of God are answered by God in the words before us – Jesus' parable.

Here Jesus lovingly addresses questions that may be on the mind of those still searching for spiritual truth. His message also is intended for strengthening of your faith as a Christian – and mine.

There is a man tossing seeds. Tossing seed everywhere imaginable. Seed spread generously, consistently, graciously across the landscape.

If the sower were aiming for efficiency, he could pick and choose where – and where not – to scatter seeds. But we see no such thing. There is just the sower, tossing seeds, every which way possible, covering the ground. Someone might call it risky – a willingness that so much seed be lost. Logic might say it is inefficient – so much time spent casting to have a sizeable portion never sprout, or not last.

So, what's going on? What spiritual truth does Jesus show us?

[Call the children forward. Pull out seeds, dirt.]

Jesus uses something we see in the world, to teach us God's truth. That's what a parable is. Here are some seeds, dirt, and someone to scatter the seeds. So, let's look at these everyday things which are in Jesus' parable, and see what we learn:

You and I are in the parable. So which one – seed, dirt, or planter – represents you? We are the dirt. “Really?” Does that sound mean, or kind of “ewwww”? Understand: Jesus isn't calling us dirt. He is teaching us something about ourselves by using this example.

Now, dirt doesn't do a lot... does it? In fact, if no seeds are placed in this dirt, will anything just spring up out of it? No. Unless a seed is placed in the dirt nothing will grow. Dirt doesn't plant the seed. Someone must plant a seed in it.

Here's something else to know. Does the dirt have the power to keep a plant alive all on its own? In other words, if you planted a seed in this dirt and then did nothing else to help it, would the plant last long? No. Why? Water & sunshine must be given to the dirt on a regular basis, in order to keep plants alive and growing. And dirt doesn't make it rain. It doesn't make the sun shine.

So how are we like the dirt?

God has come to us with the seed of his message, and He has planted that message of Jesus as our Savior in us [inside of us, in our hearts]. That is how faith in Jesus is created. That's the only way. We can't plant the message of God inside ourselves.

God also is the One who has come and watered our faith with his Word. This is how faith remains alive and growing.

That's why it is so good that you are here. At worship, Sunday school, Soccer Club, and – when you get a little older – Catechism, you hear God's Word. That's why reading your Bible at home, or for younger kids – having your parents teach you the Bible, is so very good for you. This is how God plants his truth in you, and makes you grow in knowing: how much He loves you – how Jesus, God the Son, came to earth – lived for you – died for you – how God loved you so much he has reached out to you, and has planted faith in you to trust in Jesus as your Savior.

Listen in the rest of the sermon to hear more about how much God loves you. **[Children return to seats.]**

Our Gracious God scatters his saving message out to all (Rom. 10:18, Is.52:10, Ps.98:1-3, 119:89-90, Matt.24:35), letting it land wherever – in rocks, in weeds, on the matted ground of the path. The Lord – in love – is scattering love.

The Lord is both sower and seed - Amazing, is it not! The Lord is really throwing himself – his very life to you, with all he has to give to you. “The message” of the Bible is: a God so great, with a love so great, seeks and finds people so lost, so undeserving.

This parable shows how good our God is, while treating honestly & in a necessary way our lost, sinful, powerless condition. Remember, the dirt represents us. The Lord's love to us is unasked and unearned. Here is another glimpse, another God-given view of the most amazing truth. In a word, it is “Grace.” It is love so unique that it deserves a word all its own – grace. This love of God, shown in the parable, is told throughout the Bible.

- Romans 5:6 states: “*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*” You and I ... powerless to remove our sins. You and I ... powerless to be free from the wrath

of God sin deserves. Our Lord in power came to us – God in the flesh, Jesus, lived and died in our place. Our Lord worked salvation for us.

- Still, we were powerless to know it. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 states: *“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.”* Our Lord opened our blind eyes to see & our hearts to believe the news of Jesus our Savior from sin.

Here is power [holding Bible]. The life is not in the soil [pointing to heart]. The life is in the seed. Our Lord scatters the seed of His saving message, and through it speaks life – creates faith – into the heart of each believer.

What do you see in Jesus' parable? I pray you see the simple – powerful – undeniable evidence of how much God loves you. See his love that wants you to know him – to have him as your very own.

See how he desires that, once knowing him, you keep hold of all his treasures.

For His saving truth does not go unchallenged. Forces rise against the hearing of God's Word. Jesus makes that clear. This is true in two ways, which are expressed in the parable:

1. Enemies attack God's truth prior to when it is heard. In the parable, notice how some ground is matted down before the seed is scattered to it.
2. Spiritual forces of evil also attack God's truth after it is heard, after the Gospel seed has taken root.

What challenges to God's truth have you faced? Challenges sometimes keep one from seeing and hearing what the Bible actually says.

- For instance, you may have heard that God's love is conditioned on your obedience. And that if you don't do well enough obeying him, you'll get only God's wrath or at least you won't receive God's full acceptance. If that's what you heard, you were being kept from hearing the Bible's actual message.

Now, I pray that all the challengers, who strive to keep this seed from taking root & remaining alive in you, do not succeed. For worldly voices lead many away – away to their eternal doom. How do you keep hold of God's treasures?

Remember the words of Isaiah earlier: *“10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”* God's Word is not only the seed, it is also water to our faith. The Word brings growth and strength. Unless we grow stronger in our faith, how else are we going to stand against the challenges which tempt us to wander when we experience trials or suffering? How else are we going to uproot the weeds of sinful worry and materialism that threaten to choke our faith? Remember where your strength comes from.

To help make the point - How many times have you seen a farmer out prodding his crops: “Now, get growing! Come on – work at it!”? No. What the farmer does to sustain the plants' life and to bring forth fruit is: he waters.

So, hear God's Word – let God drench you with His Word – read the Word – study the Word – discuss the Word – apply the Word. [The Bible] Here God pours to you strength to navigate through the challenges that spring up or swoop down upon you from the world. Give time for God to immerse you in His Word, where he gives life, comfort, hope. And along with those he works: love, joy, patience, kindness and self-control [Gal. ch.5].

Here [holding Bible] is the voice that has never lied to you. The Lord desires to hold you as His own, sustain your faith in Him against the voices from the world... all by His own reliable Word - every page, every verse, every word of the Bible.

Conclusion: Search these verses today. The word “love” is not found in them. And yet, the love of God is everywhere throughout them. Love is on display. It is love in action. Love “on the fly” - literally.

Here is your answer to what your God is like. He is this unprejudiced, un-quitting sower – scattering seed with an undeserved, unquenchable desire to reach the empty, to fill them with the truth. Even though so many reject, so many are lost, he scatters the seed. Amazing love!

Think of a love so strong that it persists in the face of rejection. Think of an individual, driven by love, who keeps throwing himself out there in another effort to reach the ones sought - though most often it means the pain of trampled upon, discarded love. Which one of us can love like that? How long could one of us love like that before becoming exhausted by it all, or at least selective in how and when and to whom we offer our love?

Today you see the love of our Lord. He keeps throwing himself out there. And he doesn't stop in exhaustion or frustration. That effort of His is how we have come to know him. Amazing! “How else could I have known you, O my God! How else could I have loved you, O my God! How else could I embrace you, O my God!” (Peace Came to Earth... vs.4)

“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” Jude vs.24-25