

“Producing an Amazing Harvest”

Matthew 13:3b-9 & Luke 8:5-8

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Growing up on the dairy farm there was a saying; plant corn on Mother’s Day and harvest alfalfa on Father’s Day. In Wisconsin school gets out before Memorial Day Weekend, that meant, to my delight, I could spend all day doing field work. I enjoyed driving tractor, fixing the machines, the pleasing moist aroma of fresh tilled soil, the feel of soil that was properly tilled warm, airy, loose yet having firm soil structure, planting a half mile long straight row for everybody to see. I even enjoyed the dusty taste of the soil that permeated everything. Memorial Day weekend was a pivot time we needed to finish planting corn and start harvesting alfalfa. Every day after Memorial Day corn yield would go down. We planted around 600 acres of corn, almost a mile square of land. Most years we still had a lot to plant, at this time of the year, so we would run the plow, disk, and corn planter around the clock. I typically worked an 18-hour day. One rested when it rained. We pushed the equipment as fast as we could without causing extra wear and tear. A month into planting season the equipment would squeal and creak from worn bearings and parts. Time was too valuable to make any repair that was not essential, so we logged the needed repairs which we would make in the winter. Meals were delivered to the tractors where we would eat as we drove. There was the thrill of racing a thunderstorm. Out in the country you could see the storms coming, so you made every minute count. If the soil was dry, we could work through light or short rain.

Planting was a time of trust. We spent all our liquid money and borrowed money to purchase the seed, fertilizer, and fuel to plant the crop hoping that the growing season would be favorable producing an amazing harvest.

Jesus tells the parable of the sower. Those who first heard this parable were all connected to the land and farming. They knew the hard work and investment it took to plant a crop. The trust, patience, and hope it took to plant and then wait for the harvest. They knew that you can do everything right, but the weather, disease, or critters can ruin the crop. Conversely sometimes you can haphazardly plant a crop late and if every other condition is ideal, you can get a harvest.

Jesus said, **Matthew 13:3-9 MSG** “What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As the farmer scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn’t put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond the farmer’s wildest dreams.” “Are you listening to this? Really listening?”

Jesus taught in parables, because God, the Kingdom of Heaven, and grace are infinitely grander than words can convey. Parables reveal different, unique meanings and insights for every season of every person’s life. We are going to explore this parable from several perspectives. When you find one that resonates with you, ponder it, savor it, and live it. For the most part there is no right or wrong way to interpret God’s parable to you, so explore the parable for in perceiving you will likely hear God speak a unique truth for you. If Jesus wanted to teach one uniform point, he would have stated it. Usually you can find an aspect of yourself in every person and item in the parable. Look for your dominate and shadow side. Check to see if God is in every person and item as well. Imagine you are there. What are the sights, smells, sounds, tastes, tactiles, emotions, and thoughts? What is the span of time? Imagine that you are each person, animal, and thing. How is the symbolism about different people, different ways of living, and different seasons in your life? How are you a farmer, sower, seed, bird, four types of soil, road, sun, weeds, harvest, field, plant, moisture? What might each of these represent? Is the order important? Is there progression or growth? What is God saying to you?

Jesus said, **Luke 8:5-8** “A farmer went out to plant seed. As the farmer scattered seed across the field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it. Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed

grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!” When Jesus had said this, he called out, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

At times, you are a person who steps on another’s blessing. At times, you are a bird who steals another’s blessing. God forgives you every time you step on another or steal. God scatter more seed. Sometimes you are the hot sun scorching another with complaints, fear, criticisms, negativity, anger. Sometimes you are a rock blocking another from access to living water. God is grace who always gives us another do over and loves to heal relationships, uniting us all together in harmony. A weed is any plant out of place, so a corn plant in a soybean field is a weed. Sometimes you are a weed. You have good intentions but your comments or actions are hindering the growth, love or joy of another. God delights in restoring souls, in taking our love that doesn’t come out right, that is twisted, hindering, hurting another and perfects that love.

A field is a system where sun, water, soil, nutrients, microbes, air, worms, soil structure, organic matter, farmer all come together to provide a medium where seeds grow into plants that flourish. You are a field, a person in relationship with others, a host who can enable others to flourish.

God is a field who provides every need, connects us with everyone and the entire cosmos, to nurture each of us into a wonderful glorious person.

You are the farmer. You receive God’s blessings and scatter blessings. You serve with joyful love to make the world a more joyful loving place. You invest in people sharing your time, wisdom, compassion and encouragement to build others up into the likeness of Jesus. You trust and hope that your service will yield an abundant harvest of blessings. You serve everyone, those who are bursting with potential and those who are struggling, those who reject you and those who accept you. How are you a spiritual farmer, disciple, hero to others? How are you a good steward, caring, encouraging others? How else are you a farmer? What does it mean for you personally to be a spiritual farmer? Who are your farmers, heroes, that inspire you? What gifts do they give you? What traits make a good farmer, hero for you? How are you thanking them? What traits, gifts do you want to share with others?

God is the farmer. God lavishly gives all people blessings, love, forgiveness, healing whether they are receptive or not, whether they share blessings or the blessings get choked out by the stress of life. God is our farmer who is always with us, caring for us, growing us into loving, joyful, abundant eternal life.

You are a seed. The Apostle Paul describes our entire earthly life as all a seed that at earthly physical death gets buried then our soul burst forth like a plant into grandeur magnificence than we can ever imagine. If you never saw a tree, you would not be able to imagine a tree by looking at an acorn. Our earthly life is like a seed. We are restricted by the limits of our physical body, our sin, pain, struggles and suffering. At our resurrection, we are set free revealing our full glory. Our love, joy, and delights are mere seeds that grow into grand blessings for eternity. You are a seed, every kind word, or action, will grow in each person you love. It may happen right away, it may take a lifetime, it may not be revealed until heaven. What is a seed for you? How are you a seed?

God is a seed. The Holy Spirit is within you. Every goodness flows from the seed, the promptings, the spark, of God loving in you.

You are a plant. Your numerous relationships, life experiences, education, family, work, yield your vitality. How you process life determines your attitude which determines how much fruit you will produce. You have a purpose to grow in love, joy and peace.

God is a plant. Jesus came to live among us to show us how to live, grow and thrive.

You are the four types of soil, at different seasons in your life and even at the same time. Perhaps you are fertile, yet also wilting.

You are the footpath soil. At times, you are oblivious to God’s blessings, unaware of opportunities, holding on to something so tightly that there is no room for you to receive. At times you are so busy, or overwhelmed or stubborn that you do not accept God’s gifts.

You are shallow, rocky soil. Sometimes you accept a blessing with great joy. You eagerly nurture that blessing and grow, however you do not have the physical stamina or emotional energy or support, to continue your growth. You launch into something new but when it gets challenging you quit. You become discouraged, overwhelmed and sad, your self-talk turns negative, so you give up.

You are soil full of thorns. We are called to lovingly serve others. We are not called to let others take advantage of us, hurt us, abuse us, or diminish us, draining our energy. At times the negative words of others discourage us. The demands of life choke us. We are poked, hurt, and wounded.

You are fertile soil. You are creative, gifted, talented capable of producing love and joy beyond your grandest dreams.

God is fertile soil providing all you need to grow into the likeness of Jesus. God is fertile soil providing the firm ground to sustain and support you.

When our youth explored this parable, they were especially inspired by the progression in the types of soil from footpath, to shallow, to thorns to fertile. They believe the order is important. Over our life, we are on a journey through each soil type. Sometimes we are fertile soil for a while, then go back to a lessor soil type, however ultimately, we all become fertile soil.

What soil do you identify with the most today? How can you become fertile soil? What has caused you to grow into more fertile soil? Can you do more of that? What has hindered your growth? Can you avoid that? Think of someone who embodies fertile soil. How do they live? Can you follow their example? Have you sought their advice?

A harvest of hundred times what is planted would have been supernatural when Jesus originally spoke this parable. God magnifies every goodness. How much of the harvest in your life is your effort verses God's gift?

Jesus said, **Matthew 13:3b-9 NLT "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As the farmer scattered them across the field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."**

What aspect of the parable is resonating with you? In this silence consider what God is inviting you to do or be. Amen