



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 12, 2020

Just Sow!

by Garland F. Pierce

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

13:1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

13:2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.

13:3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow.

13:4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.

13:5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil.

13:6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away.

13:7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

13:8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

13:9 Let anyone with ears listen!"

13:18 "Hear then the parable of the sower.

13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.

13:20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

13:21 yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.

13:22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.

13:23 But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one 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."

To many this parable seems rather straight forward; to some it is more complex, raising questions. We often focus on the seeds and the soil; and, that is appropriate. But what if we focus on the seeds and the sower?

Rev. Dr. Claudio Carvalhaes in his brief commentary on this passage shares the reaction of some poor farmers outside of Sao Paulo, Brazil who are part of a community called Sante Fe, which is a part of a larger social movement called Landless Worker's Movement (in Portuguese, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra). One farmer said, "This sower seems to not know his soil very well, otherwise he would not waste his seeds in these three parts of the terrain. He lost too much and I don't know if he can afford a new crop". Another said, "He should study better his soil so that he will avoid waste."

Other scholars emphasize the importance of understanding ancient Near Eastern farming practices, stating that the soil probably had been tilled the season before and would be tilled again after the seeds had been sown. Some might call it carelessness. Others might call it extravagance—sowing seeds wherever one can and wills. Casting broadly...giving every area a chance to nurture the seed no matter if the science predicts that some will not. Casting broadly...seeing what will sprout even against the odds. Giving every kind of soil a chance.

Jesus tells this story to teach us about God's *kingdom* and God's will. God is the extravagant sower! Jesus sowed seeds of the Gospel and God's love and will, casting seeds at the seats of political and religious power and especially to the margins of society, in the sand where fishermen cleaned nets by the seashore, in the dark corners and rough, stony places where sinners and the left out and left behind hovered and dwelled in darkness. Sowing seeds, just waiting to see what might sprout, even against the odds.

Some farmer's do not make a move without consulting *The Farmer's Almanac*. I do not know what this helpful resource might say about this present moment in which we find ourselves; but, it seems like "Sowing Time." Toss your seeds of God's love broadly, even in unexpected places. Cast that seed of God's affirmation to every child you see, declaring to them, "You are fearfully and wonderfully made" even in a society that may see them as less than or not as good or as gifted as. Cast that seed of God's assurance to that worried parent, pastor, or business owner, that grieving spouse, that lonely elder, "Weeping may endure for a night; but, joy comes in the morning." Cast that seed of God's intent and desire for peace and justice, declaring to the racist and the reconciler, the protester and the president, "Black Lives matter because Christ came declaring, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'" Just sow! And in due season, a harvest! Some seeds eaten, some burnt, some sprouts strangled prematurely, others dead from a lack of deep rootedness; but, ultimately God gives the increase. The yield and abundance of God's love and

will may come forth anywhere at any time. Ultimately, at harvest time, “We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves!” For now, just sow!

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Can you think of an unexpected place where you might sow seeds of God’s love? Where is that place?

PRAY: Gracious God, you sow yourself
The Word of Truth, generously
The Word of Life, graciously

Defend us from the Evil One
Who seeks to snatch us away

Fortify us for hard times and costly discipleship
That we may endure

Deliver us from distraction
From worldly desires and
All that would lure us and choke us with false promises

Till us
Turn us
Enrich us with every blessing of your Spirit
That we may be good, good soil
Forever faithful and fruitful for you
Amen

Adapted from <https://revlisad.com/2017/02/01/prayer-based-on-jesus-parable-of-the-sower-matthew-13-mark-4-luke-8/>

ACT:

1. Based on your answer regarding an unexpected place to sow seeds of God’s love, come up with a plan and start sowing in that place.
2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.
3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

Sowing in the Morning
(Bringing in the Sheaves)
AMEC Hymnal, #471

1. Sow-ing in the morn-ing, sow-ing seeds of kind-ness,
Sow-ing in the noon-tide and the dew-y eve;
Wait-ing for the har-vest, and the time of reap-ing,
We shall come re-joic-ing, bring-ing in the sheaves.

Refrain

*Bring-ing in the sheaves, Bring-ing in the sheaves, We shall come re-joic-ing,
Bring-ing in the sheaves;
Bring-ing in the sheaves, Bring-ing in the sheaves, We shall come re-joic-ing,
Bring-ing in the sheaves;*

2. Sow-ing in the sun-shine, sow-ing in the shad-ows,
Fear-ing nei-ther clouds nor win-ter's chill-ing breeze;
By and by the har-vest, and the la-bor end-ed,
We shall come re-joic-ing, bring-ing in the sheaves.

Refrain

3. Go-ing forth with weep-ing, sow-ing for the Mas-ter,
Though the loss sus-tained our spir-it oft-en grieves;
When our weep-ing's o-ver, He will bid us wel-come,
We shall come re-joic-ing, bring-ing in the sheaves.

Refrain

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



Title: The Sower

JESUS MAFA is a response to the New Testament readings from the Lectionary by a Christian community in Cameroon, Africa. Each of the readings was selected and adapted to dramatic interpretation by the community members. Photographs of their interpretations were made, and these were then transcribed to paintings.

The Christian Education Department, AMEC Publishing House, and others will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.