

## **“The Power of the Word” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 7 July 16, 2023**

- I. **The Parable of the Sower** – Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23 previously read
- II. **If your yard is like mine**, the weeds grow much better than anything else.
  - a. Somehow, they find a way to return again and again – but the easiest way to pull them out is when they are in the gravel that covers a weed barrier.
    - i. What’s a weed barrier? It’s a water permeable fabric (sometimes plastic) that does not allow weeds to grow up, or roots to grow down.
    - ii. I can simply walk around and pull a weed and its roots in one mass, without digging or struggling to get all the deep roots...that grow back
  - b. That’s the amazing thing about plants – once they get their root system established, it can be very difficult to get rid of them.
    - i. In fact, we’ve all seen trees that grow up on cliffs, in rock beds, and other unlikely places... and over time, they can even break apart the most solid ground... even bedrock.
    - ii. Once the roots grow deeply into the soil, they can transfer gallons of water a day from over a hundred feet down – for centuries.
  - c. Sometimes the soil might look like the perfect place for a plant to sprout and thrive – but there is a barrier.
  - d. Other times, the ground might look completely incompatible with growing anything – but the roots find a way to anchor, and the plant grows.
  - e. This is the Parable of the Sower, as the word of God is the seed thrown about in random places and springs up in faith as it lands on good soil.
- III. **The word of God is constantly going out to do its work.**
  - a. Yet, the powers that want to disrupt and stop the word from growing into faith and deeply rooting are also constantly doing their work as well.
  - b. Jesus is sharing His love and promises of eternal life as He travels around the Holy Land – He is preaching the truth of the word... like a sower tossing seeds all over the place.
    - i. In the previous chapters of Matthew, the Pharisees and religious leaders reject His teaching... and then He even challenges His own followers to put more emphasis on God than their most prized possessions – including family!
    - ii. As much as we think Jesus was a huge success, by human standards, He was losing many more than He was gaining.
    - iii. As our parable says today, in rough terms, most of the seed falls in places that does not sprout saving faith – it seems like a failure much of the time.
    - iv. Seeing all these troubles, the disciples might have been wondering if the word was working or not!
  - c. In many other parts of the Scriptures, the word is compared to a sword, fire, a hammer, and judgment... listen to these verses:

- i. “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)
  - ii. “The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” (Ephesians 6:17)
  - iii. “Is not My word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:29)
  - iv. “In [Jesus’] right hand He held seven stars, from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full strength.” (Revelation 1:16)
  - v. “The one who rejects Me and does not receive My words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” (John 12:48)
- d. Yet, the word is also compared to rain, fruit bearing, seeds, being alive, a lamp, and light.
- i. “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout... so shall My word be that goes out from My mouth.” (Isaiah 55:10-11)
  - ii. “[From] His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” (James 1:18)
  - iii. “Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” (1 Pt 1:23)
  - iv. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Ps.119:105)
  - v. And of course, Jesus is called the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14) – as all things were made for Him and through Him. (Col. 1:15-17)
- e. We cannot doubt the power and effectiveness of the word as it goes out from the Bible, from preaching, and from the people of God who regularly witness to its power and the saving grace of our Lord.

IV. **As a person who received this faith, we can rejoice!**

- a. Considering how many seeds fall onto ground that rejects growth, we were blessed by the grace of God that brought us to faith... it sprouted!
- b. We can hear again the words found in Luther’s Small Catechism from the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup>
  - i. Nothing I did caused the ground to be ready for the sprout of faith to happen in my life – it was purely by God’s power and love.
  - ii. And when you think about it, the sower is just throwing the seeds all over – it’s reckless abandon – it’s abundance beyond our understanding.
    - 1. We forget that God is in charge of the sprouting and growth, and He wants His word to be spread everywhere...

- c. We are direct recipients of this amazing grace – as God came to us – most of us in Baptism as little babies, as the water was combined with His powerful word – in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19) – poured over us and we were given the gift of faith.
- d. Some of you came to believe as the word of God was given to you in a bible, or preached or taught to you by a pastor, a neighbor, a co-worker, a friend, or a family member.
  - i. The Outreach Board is going to various places and handing out Gospel bracelets and bibles to people for that very reason!
    - 1. If you want to join them, they go over to the market in Rockwood every Sunday afternoon at 1pm.
- e. Regardless of how God’s word came to you and transformed you from an unbeliever to a believer in Jesus Christ, it was through the abundance of grace and love that God has for you... and all people.
- f. God wants no one to die without coming to faith (1 Timothy 2:4) – and He even went to the cross in our place so that we might not only sprout up to faith, but live forever in His presence.

V. **One more word about weeds...**

- a. A warning in our parable from Jesus is that sometimes weeds, or the cares of the world, rise up to choke the growth we have – and over time, can even kill our faith life.
- b. Even those of us who have established, mature faith lives can find the troubles and distractions of the world cause us to take our eyes off Jesus.
- c. Remember the weed barrier I have at my house?
  - i. I see the time we spend in the word, in church, and with other Christians in sharing the word with each other and those around us as a great weed barrier.
  - ii. Weeds are easy to get rid of because they don’t root deeply in our soil – as the word of God creates a barrier to keep satan and the world from taking root and crowding out our first love. (Rev. 2:4)
- d. The fruit we bear is often in direct proportion to how much the word of God encourages us to live for Jesus and witness to His name.
  - i. That is who we are... the blessed children of God, living for Jesus and bearing fruit.
- e. Take heart, even when the word seems to be failing, God is in charge of its success.
  - i. Remember that the seeds are sown with reckless abandon – and God’s grace is the same.
  - ii. And, remember that you are the beneficiary of God’s love and grace, as the roots of faith grow deep – bringing forth God’s fruit for the glory of His kingdom... Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Luther. (2017). Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation (p. 195). Concordia Publishing House.