

Pentecost 6 [Pr 10] 7/16/17
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 A

SERMON TEXT IS THE APPOINTED GOSPEL FOR THIS SUNDAY,
FROM THE 13TH CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

The sower sows the seed and, forgive me because I'm not trying to be critical but speaking the truth in love, he doesn't seem to be very good at it. Some falls along the path and birds come and eat it up. He throws some among the rocks, where there is not a lot of soil and some springs up quickly, but the sun comes and scorches it and it withers away. Some falls among thorns and, when the thorns come up, they choked out the seed that was sown there. Some of the seed actually fell on good soil and that produces grain, in some case, a hundredfold, some 60, some 30-fold.

I'm not a farmer and I don't play one on TV – in fact, I didn't even stay at the Holy Inn Express last night -- but it seems to me that's about 75% of this seed that this sower sows produces no crop; it doesn't even land in the right spot. We look at that 75% and say, "What a waste." Only 25% grows to produce a crop. 75% gone – for what? But, if you listen to the words of Jesus, and see with the eyes of Jesus, it's not a waste at all.

Remember what happened back when Jesus was in the home of Simon the Leper? A woman came with a flask of very expensive ointment. Do you recall what she did with it? She poured it all over Jesus' head. The disciples were flabbergasted. They asked Jesus, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." What a waste.

You don't like waste ether, do you? You don't buy things you don't need. You reuse, recycle, repair.

My parents both grew up in the 1930's, the "dirty 30's." When I was growing up, my dad began every sentence with, "When I was a kid in the 30's... Back in the 30's...". I grew up in a house where my mom washed plastic plates. They were supposed to be disposable, but not in my house. That would be a waste. Baggies, storage bags? My mom washed those and reused them. The rubber bands that held the newspaper, they were taken off with care and stored, so that they could be used to hold the produce from the garden together.

You don't like waste. But, here's the sower of the seed wasting 75% of his seed – getting eaten by birds, scorched by the sun, getting the life choked out of them.

We don't like waste and that's why it's hard for us to understand what Jesus is teaching us in this parable. Let's go back to Simon's house. After the disciples made a big fuss over the wasting of the expensive ointment, Jesus looked at them and said,

"Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a beautiful thing for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have Me ...Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her" (Mt 26:10-11, 13).

If we look at the sower and at the woman at Simon's house with the eyes of human reason, we will conclude, "What a waste". But, we say that only because we don't look at things the way Jesus looks at them.

For example, let's say you had the gift of healing. So, you went out and healed people, including 10 lepers. You healed them all, but only one came back and said, "Thanks." What would you do? You would probably naval gaze and feel sorry for yourself. You only got a 10% return on your

investment. You would conclude that this is such a waste of your time, your resources, your energy.

Jesus did just that, but He never called it a waste. In fact, He went on to heal more lepers, and lame people, and blind people, and deaf people, because that's what He came to do.

He came to sow the seed of the Good News of the Kingdom of God among men, women, and children, and the FACT is that the majority of them wanted nothing to do with Jesus. They rejected Him. They turned Him over to people who wanted to kill Him. Even those who were closest to Him were the ones who betrayed and denied and deserted Him. You would conclude that was a total and complete waste.

But, when Jesus went around sowing His seed, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, the Good News of God's love, forgiveness, and salvation, He was just like the sower in the parable. He just cast it everywhere. Do you know what happened? Some fell on people and they didn't understand it. Other people received it and it sprang up with great joy, but then earthly tribulations, persecutions, conflict sprang up, and they fell away. In other people, that seed of faith grew, but the love of the world, love of earthly things, the love of self, choked the Word right out of them.

Then, there were others. They were good soil. They believe Jesus is their Savior, who brings forgiveness, life, and salvation, peace and joy and comfort into their life. They produced grain, the fruits of repentance, some a hundredfold, some 60, some 30-fold.

Jesus didn't call that a waste. So, we don't call it a waste, either. We call it the love of God in Christ Jesus. The man who came to give His life as a ransom for many, whether people believe it or not.

When Jesus went to the cross of Calvary, He was carrying all the sins of all the people of all the world. Upon that cross, He bled and died for the sins of all people. His blood was shed and some of it fall along the path, some on the rocks, some among the thorns, and some on good soil.

You know that very well. You have heard and received that Word and you believe that Word. You know that you are a sinner who deserves death and hell for eternity. But by that Word of God sown in your hearts, you also believe Christ Jesus gave His live FOR YOU upon that cross. Because He did that for you, all of your sins are forgiven. Forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation are all yours and all of that has been sown into you by the Word of Christ that has been sown into your heart.

And now, you the good soil, are producing the good fruits of repentance, producing a yield of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Ga 5:22-23). And its glorious and beautiful, because as you do that, you become that sower in Jesus’ story.

That’s what the congregation of Concordia is and has been doing since 1947. We baptize children, teach children God’s Word in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Catechism; we preach God’s Word from the pulpit, Bible class, at the nursing home, hospital rooms, jails; we feed sinners the life-giving body and blood of Jesus. And in the 70 years this House of God has been sowing that seed, it means that a lot of that seed has fallen on the path and the evil one has snatched it hearer’s hearts; on rocky ground and that seed immediately sprang up, but the scorching heat of tribulation, persecution, conflict withered it away; among the thorns and those thorns of the love of this world and its riches and the love of self choked out that seed of the Word. We look at all the time and effort and

money and emotion that has been put into keeping the lights on and shoveling snow.

In all those 70 years, it is NOT a waste. Some of that seed fell on good soil and that is awesome! How we rejoice and give thanks for that! That time, effort, money, emotion has been well spent. Jesus Himself taught us,

“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray” (Mt 18:12-13).

So, keep doing it! See your neighbor as Jesus sees them. Sow the seed of the Good News of the Kingdom of God, so that people may hear Jesus and be saved. “He who has ears, let him hear” (v. 9).