

## Seventh Sunday after Pentecost - A Proper 10 (2026)

Genesis 25:19-34

Psalm 119:1-5-112

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

“Let anyone with ears listen! Hear the parable of the sower.” In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Who doesn't like a good story? Good storytellers engage us with their choice of words, the images they paint in our mind's eye, how they capture moments of drama or ecstasy with their voice and body language, and how we often find ourselves completely enthralled by their persona and wit. I think of Garrison Keillor and his tales from Lake Wobegon, along with his predecessor, Mark Twain, arguably America's 'father of American literature' for his ability to tell his stories in the speech of the 'common folk.' I suspect many of us have our own memories of our favorite uncle spinning his yarn of mystery and suspense around the campfire at family reunions or the heart-wrenching and devastating accounts of the few remaining survivors of Nazi concentration camps.

I am rather confident that Jesus was an amazing storyteller. There was obviously something about what he said and taught and how he engaged the ever-growing crowds of folks, many just curious to see who this itinerant preacher from Nazareth was, while others hung on his every word as they witnessed firsthand his miracles of healing and feeding of thousands. But we also know that there were those who weren't so moved by Jesus' vision of a 'coming kingdom' that, even on the Sabbath, caring for people and creation was a priority over rules of religious ritual. Not everyone wanted to 'hear' Jesus' message of hope and victory to those who were hopeless and oppressed, and a good portion of chapter 12 in Matthew's gospel, which precedes today's reading, recounts this rejection and the desire by the religious leaders to find ways to have the messenger and his message destroyed.

Despite my assumption of Jesus' ability to tell stories, today we see a particular type of storytelling he employs with this large crowd that has been following him. The crowd was so large that he had to take up residence in a boat and cast out a way for all to see and hear. Today, Jesus teaches the crowd in the form of a parable, a short, simple story, drawn from ordinary life, *that illustrates a spiritual truth*. As you just heard, today's teaching comes in the form of the Parable of the Sower, a spiritual truth-telling story of seeds, soil, rocks, birds, hearts, and a mind-boggling harvest. And while it may not be as comforting as the Parable of the Prodigal Son, or the Parable of the Lost Sheep, or the Parable of the Good Samaritan, it is nonetheless as familiar, even if the message might have more of an 'edge' to it, depending on the preacher's choice of prisms through which it's viewed.

Jesus begins his spiritual truth-telling by introducing a Sower who went out to sow. His approach to sowing seed was very familiar to Jesus' listeners, for it was a common way of spreading seed. It may sound strange to our 21st-century ears, this undisciplined and imprecise method of broadcasting seed any and everywhere, but that's how they did it. They would cast their seed in the land they owned, then follow the plow to bury it in the ground.

Jesus continues by telling his listeners that some of the scattered seed fell on the roadside, a byproduct of the sowing method used; not all the seed was going to land where he necessarily intended. Therefore, birds came along and ate it up since the roadside was obviously not designed for seed sowing. Other seed, Jesus said, fell among rocky ground with little soil, and though it initially survived and sprouted, it did not have the opportunity to develop deeper roots and thrive because the sun would rise and the sprouts would be scorched. Still other seeds fell among thorns, and while the thorns wouldn't kill off the newly formed plants right away, the gradual competition for water and sunlight ultimately resulted in the thorns and weeds overpowering the young plants, and they died. And finally, Jesus tells of the seeds that fell on 'good soil' that brought forth grain, and the resulting harvest, while varying in quantity, was abundant, even extraordinarily abundant, by anyone's standards. He concludes his remarks to the crowd with the admonition, "Let anyone with ears listen!" They all 'heard,' but in our experience of the

crowds that followed Jesus, many didn't 'listen,' or 'understand;' they didn't grasp its application for their lives.

Thus, the explanation of the parable to his inner circle of disciples. What was initially a description of seed falling on four different landscapes/soils, now turns to the receptivity of the human heart to nurture the seed (the word of God) that has been sown.

Jesus explains that the seed that fell along the roadside and was eaten by birds is like the person who cannot grasp the implications of the seed in his/her life. While the seed is available, there is no interest in understanding and appropriating it into one's life. As a result, the evil one, the birds, are glad to pluck it up and keep it from finding some other soil. As for the seed that falls on rocky ground, this is like the person who initially responds with interest and enthusiasm. These are the folks who are new to the faith who sign up for every committee and event. They are 'on fire'.....until.....they come to realize that living the life of a disciple is way more involved than doing 'church work.' They fail at creating a relationship with Jesus, and when the going gets tough, they're gone.

Jesus now moves on to explaining the thorny ground: these are the folks who find faith in Jesus, but over time their interests, cares, pleasures, and expectations for life shift from the ways of God to the ways of the world. They fail to come to rely on God and his provision and get caught up in issues, ideas, and initiatives that result in Jesus becoming less a part of their lives. The Spirit gets choked out by the world's desires and demands.

And finally, Jesus speaks of the seed that fell on 'good ground.' This is the person who not only 'hears' the word but 'understands' it, which results in bearing fruit and brings forth a harvest that is exponentially abundant. When the word of God is nurtured in the human heart, lives are transformed and bear fruit, just as the seed that fell and was nurtured in 'good soil.'

Well, that's the parable and its explanation. From a Christian perspective, it all makes sense, doesn't it? What captured me, though, were two things: the Sower and *our* responsibility for sowing.

First, the Sower. While the Sower is unnamed, the implication is clear: this individual is God. This is our Sower-God who flings the good news of his message of forgiveness of sins, salvation, mercy, and an abundant life to be lived eternally, lavishly, and without reservation. This is our Sower-God who not only spreads his presence in the 'good soil' of life but also finds ways to crack open even the hardest of hearts with his seed of goodness and love. This is our Sower-God who waits patiently for the harvest to come and doesn't grade one quantity of fruitful living over another. This is our Sower-God who will nurture the seed that takes root wherever it is planted and received, knowing full well what that seed needs to fully bloom into productive fruit.

The second aspect deals with our ongoing responsibility as Sowers. God has placed into your heart and soul his life-giving seed of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; the fruit of the Spirit. It is our Christian calling to spread the seeds of this fruit just as God does, lavishly and without reservation. Maybe it's with our neighbors, our children, our grandchildren, fellow congregants, the homeless, the helpless, the destitute, or the lonely. We are charged to spread the good news we've incorporated into our lives to those who find themselves on the roadside, rocky ground, or a thorny thicket. What God does with our sowing is for his sovereign purpose, not ours. Be the crazy sower of God's seeds wherever and whenever you can. Don't wait for the opportunity of the 'perfect soil.' Just go crazy with God's love and compassion and the world will bloom all around you.