

Loving wastefully, the sower sows...

Divine sower, scattering seed, never hoarding, wasting life – or so the world thinks: give us the depth to receive the gift so freely given and the maturity to revel in love's abundant, reckless growth; through Jesus Christ, the grain of life..

A Collect for Proper 10A, Prayers for an Inclusive Church

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah 55:10-13; Psalm 65:9-14; Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

JULY 16, 2017

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

THE REV. RANDALL C.K. DAY, D.MIN., PRIEST AND RECTOR

THE GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 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. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. 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. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 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. 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. 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."

Bishop John Shelby Spong has said: "God is the Source of Life who is worshiped when we live fully. God is the Source of Love who is worshiped when we love wastefully. God is the Ground of

Being who is worshiped when we have the courage to be."

Other ways he has said this are: "The gospel of Jesus is to live fully, love wastefully and to be all that one can be." Or: 'Living

fully, loving wastefully and being all that we can be' is my definition of seeing the presence of God in human life."

The short version of this sermon is: "Loving wastefully, the sower sows."

And that means everything to us. It means everything to everyone. It means everything to the world, to the whole of humanity and to the whole of the created order.

But it is nearly beyond us to grasp.

If there isn't a hook in it, well, we'll put a hook in it.

And that's what we see in these two parts of the gospel reading today. The first part: clearly Jesus. The second part, the so-called interpretation: not so much.... In that second part we can see the anxiety of early Christian religious leaders strategically applying this parable to their situation, urging people to persevere, overcome opposition, resist the distraction of daily concerns (like their own wealth or lack of it), and so on. Not necessarily bad... just not what Jesus was saying....

In the telling of the parable, there is nothing strategic.

Probably the opposite of strategy.

At the heart of it is this sower

who went out to sow. Period.

He didn't go out to invest or to get a certain yield or to practice good stewardship or to make sense or any of the other qualities we may value from a religious or educated perspective.

He went out to sow.

And, by the way, is still sowing.

To the divine mind, the divine eye, the path and the fertile ground, the thorns and the rocky ground were (and are) all the same.... They all had the same potential to live – to live fully, as Bishop Spong would say... to be all they can be (not just what they are).

And let's recognize ourselves – both in the parable itself and in the interpretation: we are all of the above. We are the path, the rocky ground, we are the shallow ground, the deep earth, we are the patches of thorns and the good soil. And I mean each of us and all of us – all at once. It is the unavoidable nature of being human that we cannot be just one of those (no matter how we may clench our fists and white knuckle our lives, willfully striving) – and that may be why the seed fell on all of the various types of ground – they were inseparable – to sow seed on one patch of soil was to sow seed on all of them....

We live in a global and local context in which we are ever more

aware of scarcity, lack, need. The finite nature of being human – we are, essentially (of our essence) limited – leaves us with always needing something – more health, more food, more security, more prestige, more love, more comfort, more awareness, more clean water, more fresh air... you know, we all know.... Rising population and information technology have both exacerbated the problems and heightened our awareness.... We have created billions of people with nothing to lose – many of them our neighbors....

This, by the way, is why we have the politicians and elected leaders we have (all of them). They define our lack and then say they are the answer to the problem. Which they never are....

It's the sower who goes out to sow. And sow and sow and sow....

And, as our source, our pattern and guide, God sets us on the same task: simply: to sow – wastefully, recklessly, just as we are... just as the world is around us....

“Loving wastefully, the sower sows.”

Do we have the courage to be who we are, to live fully, to love wastefully in the footsteps, the image, the pattern, the life, the grace and abundance and generosity of the sower?



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