

September 23, 2018

"He who has ears, let him hear..."

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."
Matthew 28:19-20

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow, but when the sun came up the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among the thorns which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil where it produced a crop..."
Matthew 13:1-23

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."
Luke 10:2

As we have concluded over the past couple of weeks in our study of Jesus' parables, our God and Father has given us abilities and talents and opportunities and he wants us to put those blessings to work for him. Good works involving selfless service to those in need is a large part of what God has called us to. But, he is also calling us to share the good news of his grace with the lost.

Our Lord shares a parable about this call which we call "the Sower". In the first century farming was very much different than it is today. Today we most often rely on heavy equipment to plow our massive fields, to prepare the soil and to plant the seed. In Jesus' day farming was very much simpler. The typical farmer would do some very basic soil preparation in some places using a camel and a donkey together to pull his rudimentary plow. The donkey's sharp hooves would get traction in the hard-packed soil and the camel's big, flat feet would break up the clods as they were turned.

Then, the farmer would walk through his field spreading the seed by throwing handfuls out from a bag carried over his shoulder. Planting in this way meant that not all of the seed would land on good soil and Jesus used this common experience to teach us about sharing the good news of grace.

Some of the seed, the Master says, lands on the path and is quickly eaten by birds. Some of seed lands on the rocky soil at the edge of the field where what soil there is, is shallow. Some of the seed lands among the weeds and thorns and some of the seed lands in the prepared soil.

The seed that lands on the path is wasted. The soil that lands in the rocky soil starts to grow, but dies in the heat because it has little root. The seed that lands among the weeds will start to grow, but will eventually be choked out by the weeds. And the seed that lands on the prepared soil will do what seed is supposed to do. It will produce a crop.

So, what does Jesus want us to understand from this parable? As believers our Father wants us to sow the seed of the gospel of grace among unbelievers. Jesus' final command to us is to ***"...go and make disciples..."*** To accomplish this mission we must share the good news; we must sow the seed. That is our only task.

Where that good news lands is not our issue. Sometimes the good news we try to share lands on those who have closed their hearts and minds to the possibility of God. They have rejected the whole idea and they will not receive it.

Some of those who hear the good news will be like the seed among the rocks. They respond with excitement and quickly accept the gospel, but when trials come they fade pretty quickly because they really have no root. Some of those who hear are like the seed among the weeds. They receive the good news and respond, but their faith is choked out by the things of this world.

Of course some of the seed lands on the good soil and then it does what seed is supposed to do. It reproduces. When we share the good news of the grace of God some of what we share will be heard by those who are really seeking. In those hearts the good news will do what it was designed to do; it will produce new believers.

Our task in this scenario is not to guarantee the outcome, but to sow the seed. If we do not share the good news because we are too timid then the good news is useless. But, when we share the story of Jesus, the gospel does what it was designed to do; it produces faith.

