

Sow All Over

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Matthew 13:3-9 — Jesus told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 13:4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 13:5 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. 13:6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. 13:7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 13:8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 13:9 Let anyone with ears listen!"

I imagine that many of you, at some point in the past, have heard or read this parable of the sower in Matthew 13. Now, Jesus doesn't normally provide an explanation for his parables, but he does explain this one a handful of verses later. There are some people, Jesus says, who hear the Word of God, the good news of God's reign, but they do not understand it—like the seed that falls on a path and gets eaten up by the birds. Other people hear the Word of God, understand it, and receive it with joy, but when hard times come, the Word is forgotten—like the seed that falls on rocky ground, where roots cannot grow deep and prepare the plant to weather a storm. Still other people, Jesus says, understand and receive the Word, but it cannot bear fruit in their lives because they are so focused on things like money and power—like the seed that falls among thorns, which choke any good thing that grows. And then, there's the good soil: those who receive the Word well by seeking to understand it, letting it become rooted in their hearts, and striving to be guided by it in their daily lives.

Friends, in this parable, we are not only the ground where the seed falls; we are also sowers. The seed—the good news—is God's love, and we are meant to share it with the world, as Jesus did. And just as there were thorns and rocky ground in Jesus' day, so now, not every soil, not every heart, is ready to receive God's love. Because of this, we can easily become cautious sowers. We want to focus our efforts in places and in people who are ready to receive, places and people who will bear the most fruit. We don't want to plant a flower bed in a patch of thorns, of course. So, in moments when we could scatter God's seed, we hold onto it, because we want to be sure that the ground is fertile.

That is understandable, I think. But I also think we do well to remember, friends, that God's love is not a scarce commodity. We do well to remember that when we pour out the love that God has given us, we will find that the Spirit fills us back up. We do well to remember that sometimes ground which looks barren or unpromising is precisely the kind of ground that God is looking for, to display the transformative power of God's love. And lastly, we do well to remember that it is God, not us, who makes the seeds grow, and our God knows how to make an oasis out of a

desert, and our God is present and at work in even the driest of places, and our God invites us to sow all over and see what God will do. Amen.