

July 12, 2010 Gardening for God

Based on Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Prayer:

I know a lot of you are gardeners. You have wonderful yards full of amazing plants and vegetables. Many of you spend hours and hours digging around in the earth, planting, pulling weeds, fertilizing, pruning and many other things. I know that it feels calming and peaceful to have one's hands in the earth and to sit back and take in your creation is a real gift. Some of you really connect with the creator at those times.

Gardeners can really relate to this well-known parable we heard today. You know what it's like to try and get a seed to grow on a hard plot of ground. You know what it's like to get lovely perennials to grow in a garden plot full of stones and you know that your potentially incredible vegetables are not going to make it unless you weed, weed, weed, and then you weed some more.

Matthew speaks about the seeds in his message. Of course, the seeds are metaphors for us, and how we would choose to be planted in life. If we are sown and attempt to live on a warn path, it is like being sown in a place with an unfeeling heart. A person sown in rocky soil is not grounded, not rooted in God, and will not thrive. If we are sown among the thorns, it is as if we are consumed by the world, possessions, self-interest and self-satisfaction. These weeds get in the way of our flourishing. But if we are sown in good fertile, tilled, loamy and well drained earth, we will blossom and bear fruit. That fruit will be the result of living the ways of the kin-dom, living with integrity, honesty, empathy and love.

It is a wonderful parable and simple really. Rooting ourselves in the Creator's goodness and Jesus' compassion for people is our discipleship calling.

Holly Hearon, Professor Emerita of New Testament at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, IN while recognizing this says "So, while the parable of the sower appears to be about the seed, I suggest (because I am a gardener) that it is really about the soil. This means that

the parable is really about us—those who hear the "word of the kingdom" (or "kindom") We are the soil.¹

You could say in other words, we are the receptors of the seeds, we are the cultivators, the nurturers, We are those that help weeding out obstacles to freedom and justice. We help to remove the barriers to honesty, fairness and equality.

Sometimes we can be the sowers of seed, but more often we are the farmers. We can encourage the sprouting, growth and maturity of seed. We, you and I, understand what God's good soil is all about. It is treading lightly when we have differences of opinion so as not to trample one another and respecting opinions. It is holding up those who feel useless, unworthy, and passed over. It is also about getting out of our own way when our judgement is clouded by expectations, preconceptions, and our cultural norms. When we do that we can open up the warn and trodden path to new growth and healing in human relationships.

When we do the work as God's Gardeners we can offer an opportunity to come to god and be in good soil. We can say, "Come and be nurtured, enriched, upheld. Come and be told you are important, special, valued. Come and let your path be rototilled so, that you may be rooted. Come and know that god will move the rocks out of your pathway and you will have a place to lay down your burdens."

Sometimes I think we might look too wide for solutions and be so overwhelmed it drives us into paralysis. Perhaps we might fall a little asleep expecting our leaders to solve everything, forgetting what we can do. God's Gardeners can do amazing things.

Right now in the grip of the Covid Crisis we might be inclined to lose a bit of perception on what other tragedies affect our friends, family, neighbours and communities. Did you know that there have been 15,393 apparent opioid-related deaths in Canada between January 2016 and December 2019, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada.² It is estimated that approximately **35,000** Canadians experience homelessness on any given night, and at least **235,000** Canadians are homeless in any given year. Canada is a fairly small county. Imagine what these kinds of

¹ https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4510

² [https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/07/09\(canadian-police-chiefs-recommend-decriminalizing-personal-possession-of-illicit-drugs.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/07/09(canadian-police-chiefs-recommend-decriminalizing-personal-possession-of-illicit-drugs.html)

numbers might look like on a global scale. Imagine the number of children that go to bed hungry each day. (For those of you that know we support the Starfish program here in Peachland, you know that even in a small community, hunger is a real issue).

Is it possible for us, as limited as we think our influence is, to make a difference? How can we move forward God's kin-dom in the face of such adversity. How can we soften the burden on the path, help someone find refuge amidst the rubble or new opportunity within a society that would choke the very existence out of so many?

I'm not sure if many of you watch America's Got Talent. This isn't a plug for that program, but I do find it enjoyable. I may have mentioned it before. AGT is basically a talent show where anyone can come on to perform. Sometimes the acts are amazing. Sometimes they are inspirational. Sometimes easily forgettable.

I do confess that I understand the Hype that promoters use wanting to draw us in, but sometimes I just am absolutely enthralled with what I experience. Let me give you an example.

(Play the Video) Voices of the City Street Choir

In the grand scheme of things the organizer of that choir has not accomplished the impossible, homeless in San Diego has not been eliminated. But you can see the result of what one caring heart has achieved. The look on some of those faces tells it all, there is a feeling of belonging, a sense of camaraderie, community, compassion and of course love. For those individuals, the worn path of packed soil has been loosened, a feeling of being trodden upon has been lifted. Many of the rocks in the way of a life journey have been cast aside. The weeds that have been chocking life itself have been removed, there is opportunity for new growth, there is opportunity for hope. That is pretty amazing.

What does it mean to be good soil and how do we nurture good soil in those around us, and in our communities?

It starts quite simply I think, it starts by caring. It starts with a sincere hello, how are you? Parking our own individual ego is also a good thing as it paves the way for good and helpful listening. Forgiveness is a biggie too.

We all get a little grumpy and sometimes we act our or vent and offend others. Being able to apologize, moving us to reconciliation is another way to nurture God's good soil.

Perhaps we could develop a recipe for God's Good Soil. Something to think about.

Start with some people who care, add some tenderness, compassion and empathy. Throw in a good portion of eagerness, and determination. Sprinkle with kindness and compassion. Mix with a large love filled spatula. Let the mix come together and wait to see what happens.

Thanks for listening today.

Amen