

Sermon for July 13, 2014
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

When I hear this parable with my farmer's ears; I can almost hear my grandfather give Jesus a planting lesson. First of all you don't waste seed by spreading it about willy nilly; it's too expensive and precious. I remember the different colored plates that were hung in the granary to be used in the corn planter. Each different type of seed had its own plate that went in the planter. That way the correct amount of seed was put into the soil.

Seed also wasn't spread on pathways. On our old oats and alfalfa planter in the back were two levers and what functioned as a seat. While planting someone would sit on the back of the planter and when my grandfather got to the end of the row it was your job to pull the levers down which kept the seed in the planter. When he was ready to start a new row it was your job to put the levers up which released the seed.

Then he would tell Jesus that any good farmer didn't plant in rocky soil. In fact any Wisconsin farmer would tell you that after you worked up the soil you put the bucket on the front end of the Allis and hooked the stone boat onto the back, gathered up your kids and went out to pick up any of the stones that were brought up to the top from the plowing and disking.

He would also explain that you didn't plant in the weeds; any farmer knew that they grew too fast and would overcome the seeds. That's why after the seeds came up and the rows were visible you hooked the cultivator onto the tractor and went out to root up the weeds. Unfortunately this did not get the weeds that were growing up in between each plant; especially the velvet leaf weed. My

grandfather hated this weed and so each summer he, my dad, and we four older kids each took a hoe and we walked the corn rows to chop out that weed. To this day I have to control the urge to pull my car over and pull them out when I see a patch of them growing along side the road!

And while my farmer's ears hear this as being wasteful and inefficient; my pastor's ears hear this as abundant grace. I thank God for being foolish and wasteful and throwing that seed on all different types of soil because I've been all of those different types in my life and truth be told there are still times when I'm not good soil.

There are times in my life when I hear the word of God and I just don't understand it and so I dismiss it. There are times when something about the word excites me and I feel called to tell more about it; until I realize how much time it would take and what few people are really interested.

We all have times in our lives when the world gets in the way of our hearing and acting on the word. When I was growing up a regular church attendee was there three out of four Sundays each month. Today, a regular church attendee is someone who is there once every four or five weeks and so our attendance drops.

There are many important reasons why this happens today. Our families are more spread out so that means travel on the weekends; many more people work on Sundays; our kid's sporting events are on the weekends and more of us just don't know what it means to take a Sabbath. We're being pulled in many different

directions and even those of us who are here are distracted thinking about the many things we need to get done.

But still we gather because we have Jesus' promise not to give up on any of us. Jesus keeps throwing out those seeds of the kingdom on all of us time after time. Jesus refuses to make a distinction between rocky soil, weedy paths and good soil but throws the kingdom seeds generously over all.

So just as the sower is generous with the seed, so are we. When others can't be here we pray for them knowing that on the days when we can't be here they will be praying for us and holding us in their thoughts. Instead of making others feel bad about not being here we keep inviting them and telling them how much Jesus loves us all and how he seeks us out and lavishes God's abundant grace on all of us.