



## The Parable of the Sower

**13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears listen!”**

How many of you are getting your gardens prepared for the growing season which is now upon us? As we look around, we notice easily right now that nature is coming alive in vibrant colors which signal that the growing season has begun. The grass has turned green and now needs to be cut. Flowers have popped up from the ground, bursting forth with the bright colors of Spring. Even the trees are budding, and soon will stretch forth with new leaves to catch the sun's life-giving rays. Early plants may be in the ground in your garden right now. Onions, garlic, greens and other hardier plants can survive the loosening grip of Winter and begin to thrive even now. Soon, of course, we will be able to plant the rest, including tomatoes and peppers and beans and other favorites which will bear fruit in the distant summer weeks.

Often at this time of the year, I'm reminded of the Parable of the Sower, which is quoted at the beginning of this piece. This parable, from the

Gospel of Matthew, is one of my favorites, because I love the image of the farmer scattering seeds. Not only is the farmer scattering seeds, but the farmer is doing so extravagantly. Why would a farmer scatter seeds in such a haphazard way which will lead to some seeds being wasted, some seeds never growing to bear fruit? Seeds are valuable commodities to farmers in that time and place because they are stored from the previous year's production. Instead of using those seeds for food in a food-insecure setting, the farmer uses the seeds to grow the next year's crop. The farmer spreads the seeds extravagantly.

Often, we miss this subtlety when we read this parable and the explanation from Jesus which follows. Deep down, I believe that this extravagant sowing is a real subtext of this parable, one which Jesus' audience would not miss. This farmer is being careless and foolish to scatter seeds in such a way. But this generous sowing of seeds is reminiscent of God's generosity in spreading love, the seed of life, to all people. Like the farmer's seeds, Jesus spends his ministry sowing love in extravagant ways, and calls upon his disciples to do the same. We are called upon by Jesus and through the waters of Baptism to be scatterers of seeds, generous scatterers of seeds. We hold a precious gift, the Gospel of life in all its fulness which comes to us through Jesus. It is God's limitless love. We have ample and unlimited supply of this love, and we are called to share it, to spread it generously just as Jesus did. Sometimes when we spread this love it will fall on rocky soil or among thorns and this love will not grow and bear fruit. However, sometimes when we generously spread this love, it does catch soil and roots there, growing fully and bearing fruit. Like good farmers, we tend to the growing plant, helping it on its way until it matures and thrives.

We don't always know which seeds, planted by us, will grow fruit. Like our gardens, much of this growth is in God's hands. It is for us, however, to be scatterers of seeds, generous spreaders of God's love in the world. Sometimes the seeds spread will wither. But sometimes, we know not how, they will grow wonderful and strong and reach their potential thirty, sixty, hundredfold production. At some point in time, someone planted you, someone shared the love of Christ with you, and you grew. Now, you have the joy of being commissioned to scatter seed, to share Christ's love with generosity, with extravagance, even haphazardly, to give that seed, to give that love of God a chance to thrive. This is the simplest form of mission as I know it. We are called to plant seeds, generously, extravagantly, everywhere, and know **God's hand will bring forth fruit in due season.**