

The Word Produces

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Luke 8:4–15

A sower went out to sow his seed. But we know there was a lot more to it than that. Before the actual planting there was all the preparation. He first tested the ground for proper pH balance and to determine how rich the nutrients were in the soil. Then he did all the plowing so that the soil would provide the proper conditions for producing a good crop. Now he was able to add compost and whatever nutrients were needed and then made sure the ground was nice and level. When it was finally time to plant he ensured that the seeds were properly spaced out and planted at the correct depth. In this controlled environment the farmer provided everything necessary for an abundant crop.

But according to Jesus that's not what happened at all. In His parable the sower went out to sow and some seed fell along the path and some fell among rocks and some fell among thorns and some among good soil. The sower Jesus tells us of isn't interested in a controlled environment. He wants the seed to be scattered freely.

Not everyone is going to understand this. Jesus tells His disciples this when they ask Him what the parable means. He tells them that to them has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God, but to the crowds it is spoken in parables. When they hear the parables they will hear but they won't really understand. This is the way it is with the world and for all of us in our sinful nature. We do not understand the things of God. We don't believe in God as He has revealed Himself to us.

This is readily apparent even as so often we Christians ourselves think this parable is about the soil. We need to be this kind of soil. We should not be that kind of soil. If we are the right kind of soil then God will be able to accomplish His work in our lives. If we are the wrong kind of soil then He won't.

But this is not what Jesus is teaching at all. He is teaching us about two things first and foremost. It is only then when we can examine the types of soil and what that means for our life. The first thing is the sower himself. The sower of Jesus' parable is Jesus Himself. Jesus is the sower who sows the seed. The second thing is the seed. Jesus says that the seed is the Word of God. We must always remember that parables are not about life in this world. They are about life in God's Kingdom, that is, His people, the holy Christian Church.

Jesus is not a farmer. He is not interested in determining pH balance and whether the soil has proper nutrients. He has need of one thing. That is sowing the seed. Sowing it here and sowing it there. Jesus sows His seed freely, no matter the kind of soil. He does not wish to determine those who are resistant so that He can avoid sowing His seed in their life. The very fact that He sows the seed of His Word shows that that is what we need. If we focus on what kind of soil we are then we are missing the main thing, which is the first two things, Jesus the Sower and His Seed which is His Word.

We must always remember that Jesus brings about what He sets out to accomplish. This is shown us in the Old Testament reading which says that God's Word accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent, it does not return to Him void. If someone does not believe it is not the

fault of the Word, let alone of God. Jesus is the Sower and He sows His seed, freely and abundantly. And this seed, this Word of God, it produces. We should not think that we somehow contribute to what the Word of God produces in us.

It is only when we see who's doing the sowing and understand what the seed He is sowing is that we can understand the different types of soil. Jesus speaks of three kinds that impact the producing work of His seed. The seed that falls on the path are those who hear but it's trampled underfoot and the birds swoop down and eat it up. This is picturing the work of the devil. When the Word comes into our life the devil swoops down to turn us away from the Word. It's easy to fall into his trap, to not dedicate time each day in reading God's Word. To not devote one day of the week to being in the House of God to hear His Word proclaimed and where also you are given the bread and wine connected with Jesus' word that they are His very body and blood.

The seed that falls among the rocks have no root. Some when they first hear the Word of God receive it with joy. But without deep roots in the Word their joy fades and so does their belief. When they experience intense trials they fall away. It is very easy to think that our relationship with God is not strong if we are not feeling strong in faith or not feeling joyful. His Word sustains us even if the feelings of joy are not always there. We must let the roots run deep into the Word of God.

The seed that falls among the thorns is choked out by the thorns. Some hear the Word but they fill their lives with so many things that they worry or they rely on money and possessions or they indulge in the pleasures of this life. They do not produce mature fruit, they become turned in on themselves. They rely on the fleeting things of this life rather than the eternal Word of God. The things God gives us in this life are good, but they are for a time. We should not rely on them but rather on the Word of God which is eternal.

But there is also the good soil. There are those who have heard the Word with an honest and good heart and then they hold on to it and endure and produce fruit. This is the end of the explanation Jesus gives of His parable. How will we understand what Jesus is saying about the good soil? Will we fall into the thinking of the world and our sinful nature that there is by nature some goodness in us? Will we as Christians, having seen that this parable is first and foremost about Jesus and His Word, now dispense with that by saying that it's really about us, that we must be good soil in order for the Word of God to produce its fruit? That would go against why Jesus was telling the parable in the first place. To be clear, we need to be good soil. The real question is, how exactly are we good soil?

Like all the others, those in the good soil have heard the Word. Those who are good soil hear God's Word with an honest and good heart. So let's be honest, who among us can say that we are by nature good and honest? Do we not confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean? Having a good and honest heart is having the humility to recognize that were it not for the grace of God we would become like any of the other three types of soil described. Honesty and goodness means humility and repentance. We do not always live as if the Word of God is foremost and we do crowd out His Word with many other things.

This is why Jesus calls for endurance. This is why He calls on us to hold on to His Word. It's hard to remain faithful to the Word of God. It goes against the grain to believe that we in fact deserve to be in hell for eternity. So remember who the Sower is, it's Jesus Himself. Remember

what He is sowing, it is His very Word. His Word produces, always. It always brings about the purpose for which He sends it and accomplishes what He intends it to accomplish. Jesus did not die on the cross in vain. His atoning sacrifice did indeed atone for the sin of the world. Jesus made peace with God and sinners, that's all of us.

That there are those who reject God's Word or fall away is not because of Him or His Word. Do not listen to those who direct you to what you need to do in order for God to work in your life. Do not listen to your heart. Listen to the pure, clear Word of God which says that you are sinful, your heart is corrupt. But keep listening—that Seed Christ has sown in your life also speaks forgiveness to you. He has saved you, He forgives you. He brings about what He says and in this way you produce much fruit. Amen.

SDG

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