

PENTECOST 6  
ISAIAH 55:10-13  
ROMANS 8:1-11  
MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23  
JULY 15, 16, 2017

YEAR A

Earlier this spring I planted a couple of things in a small garden. I prepared the ground and then planted seeds. Jeremiah and I put a fence around it to protect it. The rain was timely and when there was not enough rain I made sure to water it. I waited in anticipation hoping to see the plants begin to come through the ground. A week went by and there was no sign that I planted anything. A second week went by and I saw some sign that something was coming but I might have been a weed. I left it there hoping it was what I planted. After the third week there were other things coming through the ground. Denise kept asking me if anything is happening in my garden. I kept saying that I was not sure. They were still small enough so I didn't know what was a weed and what was a plant. There were broccoli plants coming up and I was pleased. One day I went to check things and noticed that my broccoli plants were gone. One day they were looking good but the next day they were gone. I am sure the rabbits ate them. The only healthy looking plant in my garden are the tomatoes. They will give us a nice harvest.

God's word is like seeds that are sown and like water that comes down from the heavens. Isaiah gives this message from God. He says that God's word is always successful. It always bears fruit. The purpose of God's word is to reveal God to us. It is to help us come into a right relationship with God. God sent prophets like Isaiah to reveal God's purposes to the Chosen People. The word of God transforms our lives when we listen to it and do what God says. It changes us into the people God intended. God's word reveals God's will to us and it grows within us. The purpose of God's word is that we would bear fruit. We allow that

word to grow within us and as the word grows God's purposes are accomplished.

**Isaiah 55:10, 11 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**

Isaiah proclaimed this message as the Babylonian exile was nearing its end. Many of the Jews witnessed the destruction of their homeland. They witnessed or heard stories of how the Babylonians destroyed their homes and their cities. They looked on or they heard about their Temple being destroyed. Those that did not experience the defeat of Judah by the Babylonians would have heard stories from their parents and grandparents. They would have heard about the Temple and its splendor. Those hearing the message from Isaiah might have been encouraged by the thought of returning to Judah and Jerusalem. Some would also think of their homeland and the return to a land of destruction. The word of God through Isaiah offers hope. It offers them a promise that God will be with them and that God will restore their land. God always does what God says God will do. God's word is a good word that has no limitations. It is not prejudiced. It is for all people.

**Matthew 13:1-3 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.**

Jesus talked about seeds and sowing. Jesus often taught the crowds in parables. The parables or the stories of Jesus often told about everyday things and happenings such as the parable of the Good Samaritan and a man that had fallen into the hands of bandits on the road to Jericho.

Jesus also told stories about things that would be totally absurd such as the Prodigal Son and the thought of a father running to his wayward son as the son entered the property. The parable of the sower might fall into the category of stories that might have caused people to laugh because of its absurdity. Who would plant seeds on a rocky path or among the thorns? Who would plant anywhere but on good soil?

Jesus went out to the seashore and sat down. He sat down and taught those that gathered around him. He taught about seeds being sown. Jesus did not seek to determine the percentages of the people who were each kind of ground. He did not worry that his words would be wasted. Jesus' plan was to teach and reveal God's word to the people. His purpose was to help the listeners understand God's deliverance. He wanted them to know that the kingdom of God was at hand and had come near. Jesus is the one that sows the seeds of God's word. He sows seeds and intends that those seeds will bear fruit.

God's word is never wasted. I do not stand in the pulpit trying to decide which of you will let the birds eat your seeds. I do not spend time trying to decide which of you is rocky ground or who the thorns are. I do not try to determine which of you is good soil. God's word is sown into those that gather to listen. Jesus says' **"Those with ears should listen."** Sermons are preached to each one with the intent that it will bear much fruit. The church is made up of all kinds of people. Each one has been called by the Holy Spirit to be in this place to hear this word. Each of you has ears for hearing and so you hear these verses from the Bible and you are hearing this sermon.

Some of you will gladly hear these words but they will take root in your lives because the circumstances of your life will not let God's revelation grow within you. The truth is that each of us is each kind of soil at some

time in our lives. God's word is proclaimed to the church. The word of God is sown into the church of Jesus Christ. God intends that this word will bear fruit. Preachers and teachers of God's word share the word of God but we cannot make it grow. We are not selective about who hears the message but we proclaim it for all to hear. The Holy Spirit works through honest preaching and teaching so that every word and every message bears fruit. Isaiah says the word of God does not return empty but accomplishes what it sets out to do.

God's word was meant to be shared. The purpose of God's word is that it would bear fruit. There are many ways the seeds of God's word bear fruit. We minister and share God's word as the Holy Spirit gives us direction. We reach out in love to those that are hurting and we celebrate with those that experience good things. We do not worry about what kind of soil they happen to be. The purpose of God's word is to sow into the lives of people. If you and I do not share the word of God people cannot hear and learn it. If we will not preach and teach people cannot grow in their relationships with God and they cannot bear fruit.

You and I are the body of Christ. We have heard the word of God and the Lord wants us to bear fruit. We have ears to hear and we seek to understand the word and will of God. We do not worry about the rocky ground, the birds or the thorns because we know the Lord has that taken care of. We want every word to fall on good soil. We want our ministry to make a difference to those we minister to but we do not need to concern ourselves about that. We share the word of God. We reach out in love. We minister to the people God places before us.

Jesus entrusted us with the task of planting seeds and bearing fruit. Let us be faithful in our work so that we bear fruit that gives 100, 60 and 30 fold. AMEN