

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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There are a lot of things in the Bible that can be difficult to understand, and for various reasons.

- The reason could be historical, social, cultural, linguistic, or geographical.
- It could be spiritually mysterious, theologically complex, or morally challenging.

Jesus' parables can be like this too, with much more to them than meets the eye.

- This AM's, though is pretty straightforward, and the lectionary even gives us his explanation.
- That's great because we can trace everything we see in the Bible and in our lives back to the starting point of this parable: "A sower went out to sow."

Notice that Jesus doesn't say a servant, worker, or farmer went out to sow, but a sower.

- "A sower went out to sow," because what else would a sower do? That's his only purpose, his only interest.
- In fact, the picture of the sower's sowing is almost comical – he doesn't seem to give any thought to where they land or how they might fare, nor is he worried about running out.
- It's as if he's just flinging seeds everywhere, trying to cover every square inch of the landscape.

If the seed is the word of the kingdom, what Jesus is telling us is that God is the "sower who goes out to sow," or put another way, "the Lover who goes out to love."

- Since God is Love, what else would he do?
- He's not concerned about running out of love or whether it's returned – he just wants to cover the whole world with his love.

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We need to remember that this is the basis for everything we see in the Bible, even if we don't get it.

- It's the Father in the OT, choosing, nurturing a people of his own, and delivering them every time they fall away, while promising to love them even more deeply.
- It's the Son, making good on those promises by redeeming us through our rejection of him.
- It's the Holy Spirit pouring grace and mercy into our hearts, so that we can become like God and have something to share.

Of course, God's love is the basis for every moment of our lives too, and we need to take time every day to actively think about that.

- When we offer the whole day's events to God with praise and thanksgiving, blessings are magnified, worries get lighter, and any hurt and resentment can start healing.
- This is true for past events as well, and so it's helpful from time to time to look back, asking God to show you the seeds he was sowing.

There will of course be places where it seems obvious that God was loving you, and I hope that there are lots and lots of those.

- Examples: loving parents, friends; finding natural talents, successes; formative experiences
- Really contemplate those areas of your life and rest in them.

Pay special attention to the fruit that came out of them,

- sometimes what we find is that an experience was pleasant, but didn't really bear any fruit,
- We may even find that what came out of it wasn't necessarily a blessing

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Then there are the moments of your life where God's love wasn't obvious at the time, but you can see it now

- Examples: failures; relationships ending; learning the hard way; struggles with work, school, health;
- Praise God for those and for the grace to see his hand at work

Whenever God reveals some aspect of his love that was hidden or mysterious before, we need to really let that settle in our hearts so that it gets easier to trust in his love when suffering comes later.

- When we can be comforted by just the faith that God is loving us, even when we have no idea how, we're able to respond to the offer God makes through the prophet Isaiah.
- We can have our thirst quenched, we can buy without money because we're willing to let God love us.
- We're willing to let him do the things for us that we can't or won't do for ourselves.

This is how we can remain fertile soil, so that no matter how confusing or challenging our circumstances, we can still know the peace and joy of that love growing and bearing fruit in us.