

HOW MANY SEEDS ARE SOWN?
Sermon Series: "The Parable of the Sower".
Luke 8: 4-15 July 26, 2015
The Church of the Covenant

We have been having so much rain lately that I haven't had to water my garden all summer. My neighbor recently said to me: "We've had so much rain, the animals are beginning to gather two by two and I've begun constructing an ark!" Now the illustration would be perfect if his first name were Noah (it isn't). I love to garden and to dig in the soil and to plant flowers and to plant seeds and to watch them grow. I think gardening is a lot like ministry; you till the soil, you plant the seed, you pray God provides the increase, you hope good things bloom and flourish, you water it and fertilize it...but in the end you know that only God can produce good spiritual fruit in someone's life. Only God can make our gardens grow...or our churches...

Jesus' "Parable of the Sower" is known at least in part by most Christians. "A sower goes out to sow..." (Luke 8: 5) is how Jesus' parable story begins. The church is always in the seed sowing business. As we sow, so shall we reap. If we sow abundantly then we shall also reap abundantly. If we sow seeds from thorn bushes we will reap thorn bushes. If we sow our "mustard seed faith" we shall reap faith in our life and it will grow and grow into, as Jesus says, it grows into the largest of all bushes. Any gardener, any farmer, knows if you sow corn seeds you're going to reap corn. If you sow thistle seeds you're going to reap thistles. If we think there are too many thistles in our life then maybe we need to consider how many thistle seeds we're sowing??????? Just a thought...

But I think there is a mathematical formula, a set of spiritual principles, at the heart of Jesus' Parable of the Sower. The sower goes out to sow and he sows some on the path, some on the rock, some on the thorns...but some fell, as it says, "on good soil and grew" (v. 8) The sower sows four seeds and of those four seeds only one actually grew. He sows like God sows, abundantly and in every direction. It is abundant sowing. It is extravagant sowing. He takes huge handfuls of blessing and faith and casts it everywhere and on everyone. The seed falls into the heart of the "just and the unjust", the good and the bad, those with beautiful hearts and also the spiritually ugly. It dropeth as the gentle dew from heaven. The seed falls into places where it will never hope to grow. But that's the way God's love is –it is sown into places where it may never take root, never bloom and grow, never produce any spiritual fruit for the Kingdom. But God doesn't care; God keeps sowing and sowing and sowing everywhere and into every situation and into every life. There is no life into which God will not sow and sow abundantly and sow with the hope in the heart of God that something, some way, somehow can bloom from the driest, dustiest life, from the stoniest and rockiest heart, from the most weed-choked soul. Sow abundantly; reap abundantly. Thank you, Lord, that you choose to sow into the rock-like parts of my heart, too.

But the mathematical formula in this is that FOUR SEEDS produce ONE RESULT. FOUR SEEDS produce three "no's" and one "yes". Sow four invitations to church and you'll reap one attendance. Have four people come to church and it will produce one new disciple. I'm not asking you to impart the Four Spiritual Laws to someone. I'm not suggesting that you have to make compelling theological arguments to someone. Somehow you have to argue someone into the Kingdom. I'm just asking you to consider inviting someone to come, to sit next to you, a friend or a coworker, a neighbor or a relative, a family member who lives in your own household. It may be someone who is already a church member who you haven't seen in a while. Come with me. Sit with me. I'll meet you in the Commons Area before church. Have a cup of coffee during fellowship time with me. See you there. Let's go out and have

lunch afterward at Eat N Park. This isn't that hard. Its not rocket science. Just bring them to church and let Jesus do the rest. He IS the good sower. He will sow the good spiritual seed into their hearts. He will sow what they need into them. We make it too complicated. Simple. Just sow one seed into someone and let Jesus to the rest.

So if some falls on the path, and some on the rock, and other seeds fall among thorns, but a fourth of the seed falls on good soil, then what does this means for us as The Church of the Covenant? If we take in only 40 new members in calendar year 2015, how many seeds does this mean that we have sown? It takes four invitations for someone to come, and they need to come at least four times to actually then want to join, that means that every new member represents 8 seeds sown. So...40 new members means that the 850 members of The Church of the Covenant sowed perhaps 320 total seeds in order to produce the fruit of 40 new members. That's over 52 weeks and 365 days. God's wanting to sow abundantly into people's lives but they have to come in order for God to sow into their lives. God is wanting to sow faith and love and hope into people's lives but they have to be invited.

So, let's do the math...If just 40 of you heard the message from God today and just 40 of you hearkening to the voice of God made just one personal invitation to just one person, if you chose to sow just one invitation into someone's heart, how many more people would be in church next Sunday? Answer: 10. Say, 250 people in church today that would mean there would be 260 people in church next Sunday. And if the following week just 40 of you were willing to sow just one seed into the life of one person, how many people would be in church the following Sunday? Answer: 270. And so on and so forth, until by Rally Day on September 13th there should be at least 300 people or more in worship. And the seed sowing in August would produce how many new members for the fall new member class? Well, at least 10 additional new members for the church. And Emails won't do it. And text messages won't do it. And EBlasts won't do it. And church newsletters and printed letters won't do it. And advertisements in the newspaper won't do it. They're important. But there is no substitute for someone, a real live person, sowing a personal seed of faith into the heart of a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker, a family member. There is a personal, spiritual power in the power of personal invitation that nothing else will accomplish in the soil of the human heart.

VBS Sunday was awesome in its attendance. The church was packed with children and young families a lot of which were not member children. There was a lot of seed sowing by Camille Braun and the preschool and by Stacy Phillips and the Christian Ed department. This is not rocket science. They sowed seeds and people came. How awesome would it be for more than 300 people to show up for church, seeds planted in their heart, on Rally Day, on September 13th? What kind of a spiritual kick off for this fall would that be?

40 people would need to begin to sow seeds this week for that to happen. How many seeds of faith would you be willing to sow into the heart of a friend that would draw them into the presence of Jesus, that would well up within them into eternal life in HIM? What kind of a blessing would that be to them? Jesus said: "A sower went out to sow his seed..." Any gardener knows—you can't reap a harvest if you don't plant a seed.

How many seeds will you sow? And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*