

SOW ABUNDANTLY
Sermon Series: The Parable of the Sower
August 9, 2015 2 Corinthians 9: 6-15
The Church of the Covenant

"A sower went out to sow his seeds..." begins Jesus' Parable of the Sower (Luke 8: 5). So now in this third sermon in the series I ask –**What is the secret to the super-abundant life?** *"The point is this",* writes the Apostle, *"he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."* (2 Corinthians 9: 6) The mathematical formula for the super-abundant, bountiful life, is this –If we sow four spiritual seeds for God, one actually takes root and grows, and if one actually takes root and grows it will produce a hundred-fold. That's the summary of the two previous sermons. So if sowing just four spiritual seeds for God produces a hundred-fold for the Kingdom of God then what is the point? The point is this –sow abundantly, reap abundantly. Sow with abandon, reap with joy. Don't just sow four seeds. Sow spiritual seeds for God everywhere and in everyone and watch *"God provide the increase"*. The point is this –the more spiritual seeds we sow to the Lord, the more abundant our life will be. If we want the super-abundant life then sow joyfully and abundantly spiritual seeds for God.

We know according to Jesus' Parable of the Sower that the "seed" is the Word of God. The seed is God speaking into our heart through the written Word, and through study of the Bible; through the Living Word, Jesus Christ, speaking into our hearts; through the Holy Spirit, the active Word, answering our prayer. The Apostle writes in 2 Corinthians, that *"He who supplies the seed to the sower...will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness."* (2 Corinthians 10) Who supplies the seed that we sow? The Lord God Almighty; it is HE ALONE who supplies the seed that grows in faith and wells up into eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ. We are to be abundant sowers of the seed which the Lord God first plants into our heart through study and prayer.

So how then does this work? I remember in advance of our Haiti Mission Trip this past April that I got on my knees in prayer. I knew that there were various things we would be doing on the mission trip. But I also knew that there were also my "God assignments"; there was what the plan was and then there was also what was God's personal plan for my time in Haiti. You have to study and you have to pray. You have to open your heart for God to plant a seed within it. God first plants the seed in my heart and then we take that seed and plant it in someone else's heart. *"We do not have because we do not ask."* (James 4: 2) *"Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you."* ASK for the spiritual seed to be sown within your heart; seek in the Word and through prayer that the spiritual seed may be sown; knock repeatedly on the gates of heaven for the Word to come down and fill your soul and your spirit with an over abundance of the seed of God. How does this work? ASK the Lord plant the seed within your own heart that you then may plant it in another heart.

So that week before I left for Haiti I had three distinct impressions from God. First, that I would meet someone who I was to encourage. Second, I would find a young person there who was struggling with a call into ministry and I would be part of that young person's call. And third, I was to find a young person there who I was to help and support. Three seeds planted in my heart by God. So I went to Haiti excited and expectant at what the Lord God Almighty was going to do through me... Upon arrival I almost immediately met a woman, by the name of Mary, who is a missionary from the Pittsburgh area, who had volunteered to serve as a Preschool Teacher in the New Testament Mission School in LaCroix. She had sold everything to come to Haiti for the Lord. And she was down and discouraged; she poured her heart out to me, "Was she a fool for having come here? She wasn't connecting with the children very well.

She felt isolated and alone. Was she wrong in coming to Haiti?" Now I am not always the brightest bulb in the pack but even I recognized that this was the person God had sent me to Haiti to encourage. So I encouraged her heart and reminded her of her call. I gave her permission to kick loose and do what was on her heart to do. At one point I said to her, "I believe God has sent me all the way from Pittsburgh just to encourage you." By the end of the week her classroom reverberated with the sound of joyful children laughing and singing and Miss Mary was smiling with a joyful radiance that could only come from the heart of God. One seed planted in me that was planted in another producing abundantly for the Kingdom of God.

Then there was the young man, Sammy, in the child sponsorship office. You could watch him with the children and young people and know he was gifted in ministry. We had a couple of brief conversations about serving the Lord and I thought to myself, "I think this is the young person considering a call into ministry." I went to Pastor Pierre, the leader of the New Testament Mission, and asked him about Sammy and if Pastor Pierre thought Sammy was called into ministry. And Pastor Pierre said, Yes, he was pretty sure that he was. So how then did God bring this all about? By plunking me right next to Sammy in the cage truck, two hours up to the village of Paul, and two hours back from the village of Paul. I shared with him the call story of Moses, that popped into my head while we were bouncing up and down on the road, and, of course, that was the Bible verse that already was the verse God had placed in Sammy's heart as he struggled with his call. On the last day I prayed with him and told him to "Go for it" and he went in and spoke with Pastor Pierre about his call. I recently received an email from him with a picture attached. It is of Sammy being baptized in the full immersion baptismal fount in the church in LaCroix. One seed planted in my heart, planted in the heart of another.

Then there was the young man, Anel, who showed up every day in the courtyard of the New Testament Mission. He was a great soccer player and a little surly, as most adolescents are. I spent my late afternoons and early evenings after we returned from the work of the day looking for the third person I was to help. I was far less clear on this one. But the week was ending and I went to the Child Sponsorship Office, and Sammy got me the list of the kids who needed sponsors, and the third name on the list was Anel's. He was older, would be more difficult to find a sponsor for, someone had been his sponsor and had dropped out. I was to sponsor him. I pray for him and others each day and by name now. Now the coolest part of the story is that I tried to connect Sammy with all the young people I had met that week. "They need a youth group, Sammy. Don't wait to do ministry until after you are a pastor; do it NOW. Here is your congregation, all these wonderful young people. Here is where God is calling you to start." So after I came home, how cool is it to discover that Sammy has started a youth group on Friday evenings? And how cool is it that he sent me a picture of the core group of kids? And how cool is it that Anel is in the picture? How amazing is it to sow seeds for the Living God????

The greatest seed sower who ever walked the face of this earth was our Lord Jesus. He sowed them everywhere and within everyone –Little Zacheus, the taxgatherer whom no one loved; The Samaritan Woman, the outcast driven away by her own sin; even into Judas, who would betray Him. Some fell on the hard path but others fell into good soil and grew. A sower went out to sow his seeds and that sower sowed the Word into the lives of people and that sower was Jesus. HE is the Word of God. HE sowed His life into people. He sowed His faith into people. He sowed His hope into people. And He sowed His love into people's hearts. *"I have come that they might have life and life abundantly."* (John 10:10) And His life was the seed He sowed so abundantly into people's heart. And He came to a cross. And He willingly agreed to go to that cross and to suffer and die. And He died a terrible death for you and for me. He did not count the cost. He gave everything. Broken and poured out, He gave it all. He gave every last droplet of blood for you and me, abundantly. And His body was taken down from the

cross and placed in a borrowed tomb. It was sown into the ground like seed. And on the third day it was raised in POWER to give resurrection POWER as the secret to abundant life and it wells up into eternal life in HIM.

Jesus said: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12: 24)*

His is the ONE LIFE that has been sown into OUR LIFE that is to be sown into the LIVES OF OTHERS. The secret to super-abundant living is no secret anymore. Jesus says: Let him who has ears to hear, hear; and him who has eyes to see, understand! And Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*