

Jesu Juva

“God Will Have His Harvest”

Text: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Isaiah 55:10-13

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Ever have a really good week?* Things at work or school went really well. You finished a project or aced a test. You didn't fight with your family or lose your temper or kick the dog, maybe you were even helpful around the house. You did your devotions every day and prayed every day. Your pet sins? Resisted those temptations this week! And even a few more on top of that. And so overall, feelin' pretty good! Doin' pretty good. Makin' progress.

So you come to church that Sunday, pretty proud, pretty optimistic. Confession of sins? Um, really can't think of anything to confess! You just mouth the words. Been a good week. And Pastor's preaching? Yup, I remember when I was like that, did those things. Lots still doin' them, still need to hear that word. And the Sacrament? Finally feel like I'm worthy to receive it. And maybe this week I'll do even better!

*A man went out to sow some seed, but some fell on the path - the hard, self-righteous, self-centered, proud, unrepentant and unbelieving heart. It didn't grow; it bounced right off. And the evil one is more than happy to come and snatch it away.*

Or maybe that's not you. Maybe you had a particularly bad week, but the service today was great! It really picked me up. Pastor finally picked my favorite hymns and the congregation sang them so well. The church was pretty full, I got to see my friends, the food after the service was tasty and the fellowship enjoyable. And that last hymn was a real toe-tapper! Good service, pastor!

But how come that feeling doesn't last? Monday comes and its back to the grind. Tuesday means lunch with that friend who is always bad-mouthing Christianity and saying how backward and behind the times we are. Wednesday my boss tells me I'm going to have to start working Sundays or he'll find someone else who will. Thursday I feel like crap because I missed my devotions all week and haven't prayed. Friday the doctor said . . .

*A man went out to sow some seed, but some fell on rocky ground - and it sprang up with joy, but it was all emotion - it had no root. So when tribulation and persecution came, it withered away.*

Well, that's not me either, pastor. I wish life were that simple! My life - it's one thing after another. I have too much to do at work (or school), I have too much to do at home. But I still don't know if my job is secure or not, or if I'll get into the school I want. My house is underwater, I don't get enough sleep, and my investments are going to pot. My doctor said I need to quit worrying and exercise more and sleep more, but who has time for that? I thought that new big screen TV and DVR where I can record 12 shows at once would help me get my mind off of things, but all I can think about is how I'm going to pay for it and all the things I should be doing instead of watching it. Why does life have to be so complicated? Why I can't have a little peace? . . .

*A man went out to sow some seed, but some fell among thorns - and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choked it, and it bore no fruit.*

Well, oh-for-three so far, Mr. Farmer-man. But at least there's one more kind of soil, right? One more chance . . .

How is it with you? How is the Word with you? In your heart and mind and life? What it should be? Why not? What is keeping that seed, that Word that you here receive from taking root and growing and producing fruit throughout the week? And what's a God to do so that His Word, so graciously and generously and abundantly sown, might find good soil and take root and grow and produce a harvest?

**Well, how about plow?** You see, good ground doesn't just appear out of nowhere - it is the result of the farmer's preparation and plow. For hard ground cannot loosen itself, rocks do not automatically clear themselves or jump out of the ground, and weeds will not go silently into that good night. Truth is, if it were up to us, there would be no plants, no growth, no fruit, no nothing. We'd be forever o-fer, as they say in baseball. Like Adam and Eve who swung and missed and turned a garden that produced nothing but fruit into a world of thorns and thistles and sin and death.

But the God who planted that Garden in the beginning, and now sows His seed so graciously and generously and abundantly, will not have that. So He plows. You. In mercy. Your pride and self-righteousness, your desire for good feelings, your false gods that cause so much care and anxiety, must be plowed under and buried. Six feet under. You must be buried six feet under. Dead. Dead to sin, that the seed of God's Word then grow in you.

The good news is that God has already done that for you. Your six feet under happened here, at the font, where the old, sinful you was crucified and buried with Christ, that a new, good soil you be also raised with Christ. To live a new life. But that's not all, for when those weeds return, when that hardness returns, when those wrong desires return - as they always do - God continues to work, plowing you under with His Word of Law, and with trials and struggles and maybe even suffering, to root out of you and your heart

and life all that gets in the way of His Word, that His Word grow in you. And produce a harvest, and abundant harvest, the fruits of faith and the good works of love in your life.

But now, God's merciful spade or rototiller doesn't feel so good. It doesn't make you happy, or feel good about yourself, or give you anyone to blame but yourself. You won't like it one bit when you come to the realization of how poor and miserable and wretched a sinner you really are. All the Word you got that bounced off, got eaten or choked or scorched over the years. You heard it, but what happened? Where the fruit? So, *God be merciful to me, a sinner*. We prayed it again this morning. And it is good so to confess.

And then to hear that **He is**. God is merciful. Forgiving your barrenness and continuing to plow, and continuing to sow His seed in you - graciously, generously, and abundantly. You don't deserve it - what you deserve is for Him to have given up on your hard, weedy, thorn-infested heart a long time ago. But He doesn't give up. Still He continues to work and sow. In you. For you. And He won't give up. He will have His harvest.

That's why Isaiah could write the words he did, that we heard today:

*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
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 shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

When you hear those words, think first and foremost of the Word that went out from God and came into this world - **the Word of God made flesh**. He is the seed that the satanic foe tried to devour, the sinful thorns of men tried to choke, and the heat of persecution tried to whither. He is the seed that was planted in the ground after His death on the cross, and then rose, accomplishing all the Father sent Him to do. And now producing an abundant harvest. A Church. Because the seed that is now sown in you is the seed, the Word, packed full *with Him*.

Which is why it is attacked so! Any other seed, no way! This seed must continue to be attacked. So satan continues to plant his weeds, the world continues to tramp you down, *but God continues His work, too*. Plowing and planting, never ceasing. Baptizing, preaching, feeding, forgiving, that the Word, that He, grow in you, and produce a harvest. For your sin that caused the Word of God made flesh to die your divine death penalty on the cross for you, is now the sin that is **forgiven** by the Word of God spoken from the cross for you, and **forgiven** by the water and blood of the Word of God that poured from that cross - from Him, for you.

And as you are the blessed recipient of those cross-won gifts, as you are washed, as you are fed, as you are absolved, you grow. In Him. For He grows in you. And you shall, as Isaiah said, not only produce fruit, but also *go out in joy and be led forth in peace*. The **joy** of the Lord, which doesn't just come when things are going your way, but even when they're not. And the **peace** of the Lord, which comes with His forgiveness and His promise of everlasting life.

So be patient. We're usually not so good at that in our world today, but seeds take time to grow. Don't worry. God will have His harvest. Repent, receive, and trust that He is working. In you and in others. You may not see it now, but in the end, at the final harvest, all will be revealed. God will have His harvest, and will it be 30-, 60-, 100-fold in you? You just might be surprised . . .

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.