

Pentecost 9, 2008
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Matthew 13: 1 – 9, 18 – 23

For the sermon this morning I'm going to use the Gospel lesson from Matthew 13 as my launching pad. It's a parable Jesus told, about seed time and harvest.

May the Lord Jesus be with you. And let us pray:

We thank you Heavenly Father for seedtime and harvest, the food we eat and the abundance we enjoy. We thank and praise you even more for the seed of faith, planted in our hearts, and we ask that you let it grow to fill our lives. May we learn to trust your word and obey your will and in every way become the people you want us to be, all to your greater glory; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN.

As you all probably know, I am an amateur vegetable gardener, one who loves to dig holes, throw seeds into the ground, and then sit back to see what happens. And as an amateur gardener, I've learned a few things over the years, about growing vegetables. I'd like to share just a touch of that with you now.

Number 1. Every year is a good year for something. In a garden, where you plant some of this and some of that and some of this other stuff too, well, every year is going to be a good year for something. Is it cool and wet this spring? Hurray for the peas and spinach! Is it hot and muggy? Well, your peppers and tomatoes should love that. Every year is good for something—meaning I suppose, that every year is *bad* for something too, but you're better off not thinking about it that way. You're better off seeing what God is up to this year, and how good it's really meant to be; and then just going with the flow, so to speak. Just, going with what works this time around.

In your garden, every year is good for something. In your life, every *day* is good for something. Now, what today is meant for, may not be what you thought it was going to be meant for. Just like I was thinking peas while God was thinking squash, so today I may be thinking one thing while God may have something else in mind. Go with what God is thinking, okay? Go with what God is thinking—make your plans, get ready for what *you* have in mind—but leave some room. Be flexible enough, to let God change your plans. Be ready to go where God may be pointing you instead, because that's going to work a whole lot better.

Number 2. A weed is usually a perfectly good plant, just growing in the wrong place. A weed is usually a perfectly good plant, just growing in the wrong place, now ok there may be some exceptions—thistle, for instance, which maybe shouldn't grow anywhere, I don't know. But grass. Grass, in my garden grass is a weed, though it would be fine in the lawn. Strawberries are great, in the strawberry patch, but they can kind of take over and sometimes I have to treat some of them like weeds too. And so on.

In other words, a time and a place for just about everything. Pride, for instance. In life, pride can certainly be a deadly sin, but a little bit of personal pride may make a student study harder, or a team practice better, or a parent go without something for the sake of the kids. Anger. Anger can and does lead to many hurtful words and deeds, but I have found that anger is a powerful gas in the engine—if I'm a little bit ticked off about something, there's a focus and an energy in my work that isn't always there otherwise. You see what I mean—a weed in my garden may be a good plant some other time, some other place, it's how it's used. It's where it grows, what fruit it ultimately bears and why—and, who's in control. That's where God comes in. God, who can put the right plants in the right place and make them grow the right way. Make them bear the fruit they're meant to bear. God, in control.

Three. In February, when you start your seedlings inside. You notice what a seedling does. It always bends toward the light. You've seen this sort of thing I'm sure—a little plant bending toward the light. What a great image for us. Shouldn't we also bend toward the light? Shouldn't we also learn to look at the darkness, as a teaching tool, something in God's world to simply show us—what isn't light? Instead of being tempted by the darkness, instead of being righteously indignant about the darkness, we can let the darkness—point us to the light. We can learn to bend toward the light, and grow in it; and bow before it.

And finally. The point that brings me back to the Gospel lesson for today. Seeds don't always grow. Sad to say, seeds don't always grow, but they'll never grow, unless they get planted.

In my years of ministry, I have been at the kitchen table in a lot of homes, and I have seen a lot

of refrigerators, which of course is where pictures of children and grandchildren are always magnetized. And I've heard a lot of grandparents especially say, This one here doesn't go to church anymore. This one here, her parents never had her baptized. This one here, used to be so active in our church, what happened, now that's he's on his own how come none of that seems to matter to him anymore?

Jesus talks about this very thing in the Gospel lesson. He tells us this is going to happen sometimes—some seeds don't grow. Some other seeds sprout, look great, then turn brown and die—He tells us this is going to happen sometimes. He doesn't exactly say why, or what to do to make sure it doesn't. He does promise, Jesus does promise that there will be a harvest someday, and that it will be abundant—more than abundant, it'll be flat out amazing! But He doesn't say when. And He doesn't say much about what happens then, to seeds that haven't sprouted. He does promise help, in the field which is your heart—Jesus is there, to grow faith and hope and love in you. He will, keep His promises to you, every last one of them. And for now I do believe He does want us, to simply keep planting seeds. The only way to make sure they won't grow, is to not plant them, so plant already. Keep planting—Jesus is Lord and Jesus is Savior, come and see what this Jesus has done for us—keep planting the seed. And wait for the day, the full harvest is revealed.

May that day come quickly, in the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.