Better Together: The Sower, The Rival, The Seed

Matthew 13

Picture of Mt. Saint Scholastica Monastery in Atchison, KS.

I spent a few days there as a part of a doctoral class I am taking. The monastery there is a wonderful place to rest, pray, think.

This is a picture of one of the many gardens there…

I feel a bit hypocritical when I talk about agricultural stuff. [Sam and Jill’s tomato garden, pruning the apple tree, this year’s deck garden]

But the Sisters at Mt. Saint Scholastica and Jesus understood planting and growing and harvesting

Read Matthew 13: 1-8, 24-30, 31-32 (on screen)

Often, we preach one of these texts, but I want to take them all as one today.

13:1 is the story of the sower…the kingdom of heaven is like the seed a farmer sows and is available to everyone but is received differently by everyone.

13: 24 is the story of a farmer who plants good seed in good soil, but an enemy sows weeds and nearly ruins the crop.

13: 31 is the story of the mustard seed (we might, like Eugene Peterson) think of it like a pine seed which grows into a massive tree.

Here is a very simple summary, one that Jesus was assuming when he taught these.

Everyone who listened understood these things:

1. What is planted, grows
2. Weeds are dangerous
3. Time and attention matter

3 stories all simple, all about agriculture, all with profound meaning for us today.

What is it?

**Better Together**... is really our way of talking about what Jesus calls, in these stories, the Kingdom of Heaven.

He tells these stories because they are a simple way to help people grasp what is really big, maybe even bigger than any of us realize.

1. The Sower (13:1-8) — The potential for a Kingdom of Heaven Church, a Better Together kind of church is here, but many of us are going to miss it.

Jesus has come, the good news is proclaimed, the Spirit has been given, all that we need to become the answer to the prayer of Jesus, “…your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven…” is here!

-Some don’t care, the idea is lost on you

New to you…

Old to you…lost passion

Like [drug store] go when you need it, otherwise out of mind

-Some get really excited for a time, but when the emotion wears off or difficulties come, the idea fades away

[conference notebook, diet, or motivational talk]

-Some love the idea but something comes along and chokes out the good seed

Worries “What if’s…”

Competition “My rights!”

Striving “My goals.”

-Some are good soil, really resonate with this truth, and carry it forward.

Is Jesus really saying 75% of us don’t get it?

1. The Rival (13: 24-30) — The possibility of a Kingdom of Heaven Church, a Better Together kind of church, is fully present, but we have a common enemy who would like nothing better than to sow weeds of dissension here.

The church is a volunteer place, right? Everyone is welcome, always.

Not everyone is involved for the reasons Jesus upholds

Our common enemy at times sows seeds of trouble among us

We learn to exist together, even with those with whom we disagree

Because the Spirit of Christ in us enables us to be patient

Because in time truth may dawn on us and we change our thinking

So Jesus teaches us to stay together and he will sort things out in the end

1. The Mustard Seed (13: 31-32) — The tiny little glimpses of a Kingdom Church a Better Together kind of church, are sown right now, in this place.

In time, with nurture, these little things become big things

The work is remembering what we are all doing here and giving attention to that above all else.

**Close**

1. What is planted grows —
   1. in us
   2. in our church

The Delusional Gardener: If I plant peas, I can hope they grow into corn, I can complain that they are not corn, but what is planted, grows.

What is planted grows.

What is planted in you?

The Farmer (Jesus) is planting Kingdom seeds, what is happening to those seeds in you?

1. What is nurtured survives — weeds or seeds both get planted in us. We decide which will grow.

We are only human, there are some weeds sown in us

But if we are believers, Jesus has sown his good word among us

Which are we nurturing?

What is strongest in you?

1. Time and attention matter

What is allowed to exist, and what we nurture is:

-who we are

-what we, as a church, become

IV. What would this look like in us?

I Cor. 13: 1-7 — “The Spirit and attitude of Jesus is…”

How to get there?

Step 1 — Ask the Sower (Jesus) to plant the seed of Christ in your heart

Step 2 — Evaluate the time and nurture of the growth of the seed of Christ in you

Step 3 — Weed the garden getting rid of what would choke out the seed of Christ in you

Step 4 — Ask the Sower to bring growth in you

**Communion Liturgy:**

The act of communion is a sacrament that Jesus began. Jesus taught his followers that this act would be a way to always remember him. For more than 2000 years, the followers of Jesus have practiced this sacrament proclaiming the life, death, resurrection, and eventual return of Christ.

We believe that communion is a moment when God’s grace is uniquely present, so it is appropriate for anyone with a sincere and repentant heart to receive the bread and juice. Coming to this table is an act of faith and the Spirit of Christ meets us here. So with the people of God in every generation we declare: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

**Let’s Pray:**

Holy God, we gather at this your table in the name of Jesus, your Son. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these elements. Make them to be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world, the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. Unify us, Lord, with one another and may we carry on your work until you come again. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Now if you would direct your attention to the screens, let’s pray together the Lord’s Prayer.**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Say:**

On the night our Lord was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Likewise, when the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to His disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many of the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.” Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Invite to come forward (left to right, receive elements— gluten free elements are available at every station— dip them into the juice, eat, and return to your seats.**