

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

39 – The Sower

Announcements:

8/29 @6:30 -

Men's

Discipleship

- Chapter 20

8/31 @7:00 -

Prayer

9/1 @6:30 -

Grace Group

9/4 @8:30 -

Sunday School

9/10 @6:30 -

White Sands Full

Moon Fellowship

ICE BREAKER: Do you have a green thumb?

READ: Matthew 13:1-9

One of the things that many people do when they sit down to study any given parable is write down ALL the different elements within any given parable to find the “deeper meaning” of all of them. Often, however, doing such a thing can cause someone to force a meaning into some given parable. For example, a few weeks ago we looked at the parable of the Return of the Unclean Spirit. (Matthew 12:43-45, if you need a refresher). In this parable you could make a list of all the elements as: the unclean spirit, waterless places, his house, and then seven other spirits. If you spend any time on the internet looking for help with this parable (always a dangerous option... but I digress) you will find people who have such a desire to complete their lists with 1-to-1 correspondences that the seven spirits are, in fact, the seven deadly sins. But that is not really the point of Jesus there. Instead, I think it is more helpful to sit back and think: who are the main characters and what are the big pictures. Once answering that, the meaning and symbolism of everything else tends to come into focus. Well in the parable for today there is what seems to be a huge character that I skipped on Sunday, the sower. Today we are going to see why. Then we will see how understanding the rest of the parable can make us understand the role the sower plays better.

While it might seem like a bit of a cop out, there is one really simple reason that I didn't take the time on Sunday to define this character: Neither did Jesus. When Jesus takes the time to explain the parable in verses 18-23 he is clear what the seed is, he delineates the different types of soils and what those represent, he even tells us who the birds are (it's the “evil one”), but mums the word on who the sower is. So before we dive into some thoughts and ideas about how we can rightly interpret this portion of the parable a word of caution: the only *infallible* interpreter of the parables is God, so we should be humble and careful when taking a stance with supreme dogmatism on a topic that Jesus himself is mum on!

DISCUSS: How can we find the balance between humility and grace on one hand and a desire to understand and know the truth on the other?

With that in mind we can ask: how can we rightly understand the role of the sower in this passage? To help us, let's get a quick reminder about what we do know with certainty. The Seed is the “word of the kingdom” or the Gospel. The soils represent the different responses to that word. The sower then is simply put the one who spreads the “word of the kingdom”. Knowing this we can look to all of Scripture to get a full answer to who is the one sowing that can encourage our hearts. First we should note that the ultimate sower is God. For it is his kingdom, and he is the one who will grow it (and us in it!). This is the heart behind passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. But we can be more particular. It is Jesus Christ who is sowing. He sends his disciples to “go into the world” and he is “with us” while we do this. Even this parable is Jesus spreading the seed of the gospel. But we can, and should, finally note that there may be one more person seen as the sower here: and that's you and me!

DISCUSS:

1. Why is it important for us to remember that God is the sower?
2. How can seeing the work of Jesus *in particular* help us understand the beauty of this passage?
3. How can knowing that we are called to “sow” be both a motivation and comfort for us?