

What is the purpose of your life? In other words, what is the product your living is producing? *(Tuck that question away. We'll come back to it again later.)*

Jesus' parable is about seeds and weeds; about fertile soil and rocky wastelands. We understand the illustration, well. It is undeserved but welcomed that the Midwest is a breadbasket for the world, while other regions of world are nothing but a desert. But even planting in such fertile soil as ours must be done with care, timing, and patience. Farmers annually know they have only one chance to get it right.

Jesus used such images in his parable to explain God lovingly plants his love, like a seed, in many lives. The same love is offered to all. The potential for abundant faith and a bountiful harvest is the same for all. However, how one receives and responds to His love is as diverse as the types of soil that exist on this earth.

Each life offers different opportunities for the seed of God's word. Some open hearts but not minds. Others open hands but not eyes. Some forget to nurture, nourish, and care for the gift of grace. Everyone makes choices. Those choices reveal the "soil" God has to work with.

How we respond affects the harvest. That is why some who have everything they want are often so unhappy, and while some who face incredible adversity seem to find the secret of peace. How can abundance often feel like a desert, while scarcity and struggle can often help lead others to an oasis of calm comfort?

For instance, Abraham's Sarah was as barren as any woman could be, yet God brought life from her barren womb! David and Bathsheba were full of life and vitality, yet the child born out of David's adulterous passion wasn't strong enough to live. Everyone is different and all make choices. Abraham and Sarah believed the unbelievable (by faith) while David and Bathsheba ignored faith and felt their passion was enough truth.

If faith allows us to trust that God's life will do what it does, then our lives have the potential of being receptive and fertile and God will make the impossible happen. If we ignore or reject God's promising potential, it is the same as a farmer who leaves a field fallow, or rejected, and the Word has no place to grow and dies on the vine, is choked by other priorities, or lies unused and forgotten.

Even for people of faith, there are times when God's guidance can't break through our busy-ness. Selfishness or laziness can choke faith as if by weeds. Distractions are like birds stealing seeds off the bare ground. Some are so certain they all the answers, they refuse to receive or plant new seeds! Jesus' parable is a reminder that we always have more work to do ... just like a farmer!

One winter I started tomato plants under the lights of my workbench. The plants came up but I transplanted them too soon, when the soil was too cold, and they died. Another year I took acorns I had kept in refrigerator, planted them in cups, and soon seedlings emerged. I took them outside in pots to begin planting mighty oak trees, but in one day they were all stolen away by squirrels. Life had begun, but I neglected to protect that life – and it was lost. (I am sure this

proves there were no squirrels in Palestine or Jesus would have added them to his parable.

I remember a young couple who came to faith and were baptized before their wedding. They had no faith background because parents never took either to church because they didn't want to force God on them. Both told me now much that hurt them now that they understood God's love and lived so many years without hearing that good news.

The poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, once spoke with a man who said, "he didn't believe in giving children any religious instruction – that it was best just to let them make up their own minds." Coleridge listened in silence then asked the man to walk with him in his garden. The man agreed. Coleridge took him to a place where only weeds were growing. The man said to Coleridge, "this is no garden, it is nothing but weeds!" Coleridge replied, "Well, I did not wish to infringe upon the liberty of the garden." I was giving it a chance to express itself and to choose its own production."

What seeds are you planting? What seeds have been planted for you? In many ways God plants faith, hope, and love in our lives. Will those gifts flourish and become productive or will they lie dormant and hidden? The choice is yours!

Three years after the Civil War ended, six families began Zion to have Sunday School for their kids and worship for their families. No one began with the goal of Zion lasting over 150 years, and yet it has. They simply planted seeds and God made them grow.

Because of God's love even in the midst of death we can celebrate life! And even in the midst of life, we prepare to embrace death as the seed for the greatest harvest ever!

Now, if I ask you to share, in one sentence, what the purpose of your life is, what would you write? [pause] Why not take time this week to do just that? Consider what you have planted in your life and what garden you wish to grow?

Create your single sentence as it will help you see what the soil of living is opened to be. In that light, you can evaluate your relationships, your job, your marriage, your parenting, your discipleship and so many other things.

When my first child was born my focus was on her new life, not where she would go to college. When one begins a job, the focus is on a new daily routine, not what will happen when you retire. When marriage vows are being said, neither husband nor wife are wondering what life will be like when they are separated by death.

Remember, the Word has become flesh and is planted among us. Do not allow that gift, given at such a price, to be wasted or ignored. Jesus is the seed of God has planted in us, given to live and to die so that a new promise might be planted in our hearts. Faith is the garden of that gift and the life that we nourish until harvest.

All of this is what Jesus was leading his follower into, when he began with the words, "a farmer headed out to plant some seeds Amen