

GROW WELL
A Message Delivered to the Congregation at Bellevue Church
by Pastor Brett Sisley on February 5th, 2017

INTRO

Growing: The concept that all things alive, grow.

Examples

Growing: That our Maker intends for us abundant life (fruitful, contentment; both now and for eternity).

Examples

God is so desirous to see us grow that He liberally sows His life-giving seed into our lives.

Sperma ("seed"): An Outline of Biblical usage

- From which a plant germinates
 - Literal: a seed; a grain or kernel which contains within itself the germ of the future plants.
 - Metaphor: a seed; residue, or a few survivors reserved as the germ of the next generation (just as seed is kept from the harvest for the sowing)
- The semen virile
 - The product of this semen, seed, children, offspring, or progeny
 - Family, tribe, posterity
 - Whatever possesses vital force or life giving power
 - Of Divine energy of the Holy Spirit operating within the soul by which we are regenerated.

God desires that His life become our life. He sent His Son to make this possible: His seed, sown into the soil of human DNA.

God, gone to bloom in human form is the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is this life of God, in Christ, which extends to us the invitation of life on another level. God can bloom in us.

But we must accept the invitation! We must open our hearts to receive His Word.

Conception, of this variety, occurs when God's seed enters the soil of our heart.

This is the Father's desire for us today. Let's pray...

BODY

Turn with me to Mark's Gospel, chapter 4, verse 1. Here we find a well-known parable: The Parable of the Sower. Whether this is your first or fiftieth time hearing this teaching, I heartily encourage you to open your ears to receive it anew.

Parable

¹Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ²And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³"Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Let's continue with Jesus' explanation of this teaching. Look with me at verse 13...

Explanation

¹³And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

1. "Do you understand what I'm saying?" Jesus is asking. Understanding this parable is the key to unlocking all of the parables. For this reason, scholars often refer to The Parable of the Sower as "The Master Parable."

The significance of this will deepen as we continue. But for now, please understand this: God is busy, passionately sowing, everywhere. And while the chance of life is present, so too are many challenges. Every parable demonstrates these truths.

Verse 14 reads: "The sower sows the word." This morning, I want us to think of this as applying to God's word broadcasted by human workers. It's a taking of that which is given, and a shedding of it abroad. Romans 10:14 asks:

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

Here, the word "preacher" refers to those sent by God to proclaim a message. Inasmuch, and notwithstanding the unique giftings of some, everyone who is called by the name of Christ has been sent to proclaim a message! And here it is:

⁸"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): [and here it is:] ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:8-10).

This is the seed that God is sowing, liberally, in every city and every hut, across this world He so dearly loves. It is a message of hope embodied in the person of Christ. Through Jesus, our loving Father is shouting: "Life is available in unlimited supply for anyone who will respond to My word! Let my seed go to root in your life. And let my eternal power grow in you. I want you to be like a tree planted beside streams of clear-running water that brings forth luscious fruit, in season and out."

"Do you understand? Can you hear my heart?" He is asking. The sower this morning is me, in Christ, and Christ in you. Eternal seed is being sown. The words of life are near us.

2. Something else I want to draw our attention to is the fact that the seed in the parable is falling absolutely everywhere. This is an important detail because it emphasizes God's loving, faithful, and generous disposition. Farming, like most other day-to-day procedures for the Jews of Jesus' day, was governed by the Torah—God's written record of requirements. More specifically though, it was the human interpretations of Torah that structured people's lives.

Leviticus 19:19 (of the Torah / Bible) reads:

"You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.

From one statement in the middle of this verse ("You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed"), rabbis developed a great number stipulations regarding the practice of sowing. The sowing of seed for devout Jews was not an indiscriminate affair; it was a precise practice influenced by their religious leaders. According to their laws, all seeds were to be placed strategically.

But then Jesus... This God-man Jesus takes what these people think they know about God and turns it on end. The Torah-giving God isn't bound by human rules. The God of heaven and earth desires His seed to be sown everywhere.

This message has a dual meaning. First, Jesus is serving notice to those who consider themselves “in” with God because of their limited understanding of His Law. “My plan, my desire for my creation has more to do with Me—who I Am—than it does your limited understanding,” He’s saying. And second: “When it comes to living the kind of life that I intend, it’s My desire is that all receive.” No doubt this was a painful rebuke to those standing before Him self-righteous.

This is what He’s saying to us today: “My seed is literally raining down on you. Behold now is the favorable time; behold now is the day of salvation! Don’t let this season pass. For when it does, all that fails to grow will be swept away. It is my will that none should perish but that all would come to me and find eternal life.”

3. But as plentiful as the seed of Life is, so too are the challenges to it reaching fruition. Look back with me at Mark 4:14.

¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

Path (15)

Rocky Ground (16-17)

Among Thorns (18-19)

Fruitful (20)

CLOSE

Where do you find yourself this morning? Are the words that God is speaking this morning falling hard—bouncing and scattering across a calloused mind? Has your life’s path taught you to become hard and questioning, maybe even cynical? Have you given up on hope because of the pain of seeing it crushed? Today, the seeds of new life—unaffected by the past—are falling on you. What will you make of them? Will you let them penetrate the surface? Perhaps you’d like to but you simply don’t have a clue how.

If this is where you’re at, it’s time to hope again: God has found you. He is willing and able to lead you on, beginning right now.

Maybe you'd say, "Brett, I know the joy feeling new life spring up in my heart. I've experience it before. But it's been so long. I'd love to get back that place, but I don't know how. I feel like God's probably given up on me, 'cause I've pretty much given up on myself."

Cheer up. God's not through with you yet. You're nowhere that He can't find you. And you not able to do something that He doesn't already know about. Today was marked on God's calendar before He spoke the world into being. Today. I can't get you back to the place you once were. But God wants to take you somewhere even better, and perfectly unspoiled. Let His word of Hope begin to sink in right now.

Maybe you're used to receiving good seed. And you know what the fruit of life tastes like. But your garden is a mess. Weeds, in the shape of ungodly friends, worldly pursuits, and the disorienting speed of life are strangling the life that could be—the life that you know your Daddy intends. To you, this day, He would say: "I love you, just the way you are. I don't expect you to be perfect. But I do need you to trust me. Let me pull the weeds. Let me get rid of the stuff that doesn't belong."

If this is you, I encourage you to be bold. Don't let compromising separation stifle your relationship with God. Pray that God's power fall afresh on you. Repent, give-up, surrender yourself to Him this morning. And if it feels too great a load, you'd say: "It's a tangled mess I don't know how to straighten," then come. Come and let God minister to you through His church. I promise you this: you can expect a miracle today because your Father is pleased that you bear much fruit and so prove to be a disciple of Christ.

Lastly, for those who hear today's message and find themselves in a season of fruitfulness: I celebrate with you, and give glory to God in whom all things are possible. Yet in love, we must also accept: it's on our shoulders that some of Christ's burden falls, specifically that of your brothers and sisters. For what is the fruit that we enjoy, that our Father causes to manifest in our lives? Is it not the fruit of the Spirt? Is it not: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness... that we savor? And do not the seeds of future harvests come from the fruit of harvests present? Indeed they do. If you are here today, enjoying a life of spiritual plenty, in love, through the Spirit, endeavor to sow seed into the lives of your brothers and sisters.

As the band plays, I want us to continue this atmosphere of spiritual intimacy. God is here. And in the person of Jesus He is dispensing an eternal quality of life. Come and get yours today. Let His word penetrate your heart. And be obedient to what He directs.

If you would like to come and receive prayer, the altar is open.

Will some of the pastors and prayer team please come and receive our brothers and sisters?