

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from July 23, 2017

The parable of the sower teaches us to trust in the abundance of God. Life and love are abundant all around us. The universe is bent toward life. The parable of the sower is first a parable of creation. Seed goes everywhere and it grows everywhere. Plants aren't worried about what their chance of survival is, they just grow. We have two butterfly bushes in our backyard—one started out growing between a brick border and the sidewalk at St. John's, and the other in a crack in a cement drainage runoff. I put them in the same hole because I wasn't expecting either to survive. They did, with a little TLC.

This sower, this creator, this redeemer, sustainer, is all about wasteful abundance. This picture of life reveals freedom and lack of concern with outcomes. Keep in mind, the sower still sows. The sower just isn't concerned about which seeds produce and how much the seed costs. In the sower's world, there is no cost. The seed falls like rain. Life happens. A harvest is guaranteed.

We often have a clear idea of what success is. We want a certain kind of harvest. We want things a certain way and we are disappointed if they don't turn out *that* way. Whether our homes and yards, our careers, our churches, our vacations—pretty much anything that we look at or invest in, we know what we want.

The sower is not terribly concerned except. . .there will be life, there will be abundance. The sower has faith.

If that is the way the world is, if that is the way our generous God is, shouldn't that affect the way we live? You are generous people, but we all have a tendency, if we are not mindful, to fall back into a mindset of scarcity. There are edges to our generosity. Unlike the sower, we are careful where we sow our seed.

We do well to be mindful of the abundance in our world, as well as the abundant opportunities we face. Can we imagine how there will be plenty to go around if we share our time, energy, and resources with worthy and unworthy alike? If we take a chance on that neighbor, if we do something good that nobody will ever notice? Dare we be wasteful in our generosity?

This is a good summertime parable. I hear it calling us to relax! To nurture generosity within ourselves and others. To steer clear of the voices that tell us to worry about ourselves. To worry that we are not enough. **Barren's:** Calling us to filter all the commercials and shows that tell us that we need *more* to be happy.

Is not being happy a boat with holes in it?--putting more stuff in the boat will only make it sink faster. When was the last time getting something made you happy for a long time? Aren't we more happy when we notice the abundance that is *already* around us. . .and enjoy it. . .and share it?

Relax. Meditate on God's abundance and let it fill you with gratitude and generosity. Don't worry so much about each individual outcome. Celebrate the Sower's presence and generosity. The final outcome will be perfectly fine. Yes, let us grieve when we need to, and relax that the sower is sowing good seeds with or without our help. It's all good.

**Emmanuel:** This week we will meet on Tuesday evening and consider our options as a congregation with dwindling resources.

Yes, there is abundance within our congregation and around us. But there is also wisdom about how best to steward this abundance. The Sower has sown good seed in us and will continue to, so let us be flexible. There are new possibilities around us, even in the grief and disappointment.

But one of the most important things we can do for one another now is to be generous in our listening. There is plenty of grief to be shared. Grief is eased just a bit when it is expressed and heard. When we are disappointed and share that, we find just a bit of relief. That is our job, now, as we make decisions, we must listen. Let us be a healing presence to one another. There is abundant healing. There are many new possibilities that will arise if we release our expectations and demands. We will continue to experience God's abundance if we listen, if we relax and follow the gentle voice of the Spirit of Christ.

When we are tempted to worry and fear about this or about that, we do well to remember Jesus' parable. The sower went out to sow. The sower was not concerned about how the seed might grow, but instead was convinced that it would grow plenty well, no matter what. That is our faith. We can trust that regardless of what the future holds, we can rest in the abundance of God. There is enough! You are enough! And all will be well in this difficultly joyful . . . journey. Thanks be to God.