Weed Seeds – Tending the Garden of God

1. There were commercials back in the 70s and 80s that showed little girls saying they wanted to be teachers or astronauts or Olympians. The camera would then cut to a woman ravaged by drugs in some alley and the voiceover would intone “nobody ever says, when I grow up, I want to be a junkie.”

2. I think there ARE people in the world who want to be evil or who hate God enough to live their lives finding ways to attack Him and His people…but they are rare and they are unlikely to be watching this lesson or sitting here at the soundstage.

3. Most people go wrong because of two seeds that blow over the fence and take root in their hearts and minds: selfishness and haughty eyes. Take a look at that amazing passage in Proverbs 6 and it is rather stunning what leads the pack.

4. We understand everything else in that passage…but the first one. Oh, we know that “haughty eyes” is a bad thing but we truly have no idea HOW bad it is until we sit back and contemplate its position on top of God’s list.

5. I want you to think of every wrong thing one person has done to another. It could be cutting in front of you in line, riding up on your bumper in traffic, all the way to the Holocaust or the Westboro Baptist Church carrying signs that say “God hates fags” and worse. And, yes, there is a common element to Stalin’s starvation of millions of his own people and a local kid getting their bike stolen: haughty eyes.

6. You cannot harm another, take what they harm, or mistreat them in any way unless and until you consider them less than you, lower than you. Your desire to have that jacket is greater than the value of their life. Your desire to get where you are going is greater than whatever need that other person has. Your desire for money is greater than the value of that other person’s need for money.

7. If we sat around and talked about this for a day, I think we would not run out of examples of this. Politicians say horrible things about each other and about anyone who voted for the other. They demean huge

sections of the citizenry so that they can then clear a path to getting what they want.

8. But there is a danger here: this is all casting about us, looking for the sins of others that is rooted in their haughty eyes when the other major seed of all evil is selfishness…and when we would rather point out the sins of others than our own sins, that is selfishness.

9. We try to protect ourselves by picking certain sins we think are worse than ours. Let me be as clear as I possibly can be: when we go after anyone in the Name of God, we are doing so without His permission. It is NOT our religious duty to point out the sins of others; it is our duty to live as Christ and, by being salt, light, and a city set on a hill, we draw all those in the darkness to Him.

10. I see so much righteous indignation and anger and judgment online and in my email inbox from the left and the right. Each side demeans the other side, makes them non-persons, and, thus, they feel superior and that superiority gives them freedom to speak harshly about the other.

11. This is nothing new, but it is saturating religion and culture in ways I never thought I'd see. When someone preaches that they really don't like the Book of Leviticus, Christian Twitter goes for them. When I say that I will not attack anyone in the LGBTQ community or exclude them from worship or my life, I suddenly wake up Christian Facebook.

12. In fact, if you DON'T join the attack, you are attacked. But, so what? We still don't attack. We know that this looks like righteousness, but it isn't. Colossians 2:20-3:2.

13. God doesn't require much from us. Faith in His Son, acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly. We, like Naaman, cry out for more, that this is too simple.

14. But God also calls us to love even our enemies and to pray for them and do good to them. He tells us not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth. He tells us not to judge others. How are we doing on that? Is it any wonder that we go after others rather than checking

for the weeds in our own garden when those weeds have taken on the aura of righteousness?

15. I'm not going to pretend that I have a lot of experience with Native Americans and their culture and language. However, I read a LOT and it has always amazed me that the majority of the tribes' names for themselves translate to "the people." Everyone else were not people. In the last few years, I've been trying to find root meanings for Asian and African tribes and I see the same thing: the name they use for themselves means "the humans."

16. We know that we are on land that once belonged to others but they were dehumanized in the eyes of our forefathers and either killed or removed. The Trail of Tears is not far from where we sit today. We are getting better at looking back at history and saying "That was wrong."

17. Wouldn't it be nice to tend our own gardens right now, not waiting for later generations to ask "how did they do that to other people?"

18. Do the hard things Christians have often left undone: love one another, serve one another, care for one another, and do what you can to lift them up. When they ask you why, tell them.