

The Reverend David Peterson's Sermon for July 12th 2026

"Sower of the Seed"

I've sometimes wondered if Prairie People have a better understanding of Jesus' stories and parables than city folks. Those who farmed and were close to the land have I think an innate understanding of all the farm imagery Jesus uses when speaking to the people.

In his teaching he uses things that were familiar to the majority of people who would come and hear him. He talked about animals and the birds who eat the seeds planted and the signs of the weather and weeds and crops and barns and harvests all these things people would grasp.

And one thing we have to remember to understand his teaching was that Jesus' world was a hungry world always on the brink of hunger and there was no social safety net, no employment insurance, no food bank, or tax rebates, although there were a lot of taxes to be paid—over 60% of a person's income...to the Romans and to the Temple!

And in Jesus' story today we have a parable we know well—or we think we know. A sower went out to sow the seed. Some fell on the path, other seed ended up on the rocks, and some in the thorns, and all of that seed was lost. Some fell in good earth—and had up to 100 fold of a harvest.

Now this is one of those stories Jesus unpacks for us the meaning: the evil one snatches the good news that is planted there—rocky ground is faith without deep roots that withers away. The thorns are cares of life choke out the good news—but the receptive heart is good ground that yields up the harvest.

But there's more to this parable than that. Every parable has a quality in it designed to puzzle and confuse whoever hears it. Like a riddle it demands to be solved.

In a parable there is a loose thread—something that is odd or out of place or makes you wonder a bit. That's the thread that has to be pulled before it opens up and we can understand its meaning. The same is true here.

The good farming folk know that every seed is precious—every seed means life or death with the harvest—or at the very least means a hard and hungry year.

This is the loose thread.

They would shake their heads at this story they'd be open-mouthed at this. What sort of an idiot would go out to farm like this? Surely the sower would carefully cast seed on the most promising soil. Surely they'd pick the rock and stones out and pull the weeds away and the thorns preparing it so the seed would have every chance.

Every seed was precious. Every seed would be planted strategically so nothing was wasted. Why wouldn't the sower use sense?

Jesus gets their attention and then compares this scenario with how people receive the news about the Kingdom of Heaven. It's like seed scattered everywhere, randomly and its harvest is unpredictable.

God plants the seed—the good news that God is on the side of his people and invites them to come to him...whoever they are. God is throwing this invitation out liberally and where it lands it lands. It will yield depending on where—it's not strategic. It symbolizes how the good news invitation is given to everyone everywhere.

We who are the friends of Jesus also become sowers of the seed. It is through our words our actions, through us being examples of what a follower of Christ looks like and the people we meet, are the soil where we cast the seed and who knows where it will land.

Most of the time we will never know where the seed cast will land. We don't know where our witness to our Lord Jesus will impact. Sometimes we will know how our words and how our care for others will impact their lives in ways we could not imagine.

An old priest I knew once said, "You may be the only gospel someone ever sees." That makes us more than ambassadors for Jesus. That makes us walking gospels.

I once was approached by a man who had tears in his eyes and said to me, "You don't remember me, but I met you at the hospital when my mother was dying and I asked you to pray for her and you did. I've always wanted to thank you for that but didn't know where you were. It meant a lot to me."

The seed I cast that day was to give a little comfort. A little time, a little understanding. It took ten minutes.

I did not know where it would land. I had forgotten that encounter but it meant a great deal to that man.

And we're not to pick and choose who gets the good news or who deserves it. We don't decide who counts because everyone counts. It's not our job to know where the seed lands. Our job as Christians is to spread the love of Jesus around as much as we can to throw the good seed out liberally and to trust God to bring about the harvest.