

7th Sunday after Pentecost – Proper 10, Year A
A Sermon Preached by The Rev Barbara Miller
on July 12, 2026

Genesis 25:19-34 / Psalm 119:105-112 / Romans 8:1-11 / Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

A few weeks ago, I was walking down my street to the mailbox when I noticed a plant growing right out of the curb. It must have grown quickly because I hadn't noticed it before. I was surprised to see it where there didn't appear to be any soil, only cement. It was probably a weed, they are very adaptable and grow anywhere, but we aren't talking about weeds this week. That will be Fr. Ian's job with next Sunday's Gospel reading. Still this weed was growing where it might easily wither away.

Today we have arrived at the 13th chapter of Matthew in our Revised Common Lectionary, where we hear Jesus telling crowds of people many things about the Kingdom of God by using parables. We hear about how God's world is like someone who tossed seeds everywhere, and another person who sowed good seed in his field. In this chapter, Jesus also says God's kingdom is like a mustard seed and like yeast. He uses these and many more ways of explaining what God wants us to know about God's kingdom.

Parables are a unique way of teaching. Amy Frykholm, the current commentator for the webzine, Journey with Jesus, says that

"Jesus' parables always link a literal sense with a spiritual sense. We are always asked to think and to feel in multiple ways and on multiple levels. As we think about farming, we are simultaneously invited to think about what is cultivated in our societies, in our politics, and in our own souls. Even if we are sowers of almost nothing else, we are always sowing seeds in our own souls and in the lives of those around us."

In order to understand a parable we must participate in the story.

Today's parable is about how God's world is like an extravagant Sower who delights in spreading seeds everywhere and doesn't worry about where they land! Just imagine seeing someone grabbing handfuls of seeds from the bucket or bag where they've been stored after last year's harvest and scattering them around with wild abandon and no thought about where those seeds land. What do we think about this person?

We might decide he isn't a very good farmer who doesn't know the first thing about how to grow wheat. Doesn't he realize that the seeds that land on hard packed soil or rocky ground or thorny soil won't grow very well?

Or perhaps we think the farmer is being wasteful spreading those seeds randomly all over.

But maybe, just maybe we could think of this person who is joyfully and extravagantly sowing seeds everywhere as someone who knows and trusts there are enough seeds for the harvest no matter where they land. That is how God is with us – delightedly giving us seeds of every kind so that we can bring God's kingdom to all people here on earth.

Now It seems like the Gospel is saying that the only way for seeds to grow is for them to fall on the best soil. But what about that weed by my mailbox where there wasn't any soil and I'm pretty sure no one was watering it? We haven't had much rain this time of year, yet this plant is thriving.

In the past when I have read this parable it made me wonder what kind of soil I was. As much as I want to be the good, deep rich soil that is ready for receiving God's grace, I know that that is not always true. Sometimes I'm angry and thorny and my roots are shallow so that I don't want to or can't hear about being kind and compassionate. Sometimes we don't feel like good soil, but that doesn't

mean the seeds won't find a place to rest until we are ready to help them grow. What about you? Do you think about what kind of soil you are today?

But like Amy Frykholm suggests, I think there is another way to look at this. Instead of thinking about what kind of soil we are, let's consider what kind of sowers we might be and what kind of seeds we might sow.

Often farmers plant a mixture of seeds together with some designed to be more drought tolerant, some will survive if there is too much rain, some do better in colder or hotter conditions and so on. Different seeds respond to different conditions. Resilience, adaptability, and diversity are the vital factors in planting.

We can be sowers of a variety of seeds also. Seeds of kindness, compassion, generosity, caring, thoughtfulness, and even seeds of invitation. And will we only sow these seeds to people who are ready to receive them, or can we share them without stressing about where they land, about whether we think the person will hear and respond or not?

One of the jobs of followers of Christ, that's us, and one of our jobs is to spread the Good News of God's kingdom, to tell people about God's extravagant love for everyone and everything. That's often hard for us Episcopalians to do. And when we do get up the courage to tell someone about our church and why it is important to us and why we would love to have them come be with us some Sunday or come to bible study or even a concert or party,

we feel vulnerable about sharing this special part of our lives. And we feel rejected if they don't come. Well, it is ok to be vulnerable now and then, and it isn't our job to get them to come. It is our job to extend the invitation. And that little seed of hospitality may take only a moment or a long time to grow. And that's all right.

Years ago, the church I attended worked hard to invite people in our town to come by phoning people and sending out brochures. Several years later I was

talking to a newcomer who said she got a phone call inviting her to the church a long time ago and it took her all this time to walk through the doors. It took years for that seed of invitation to germinate and grow enough for her to decide to try out a church that had invited her in. She remembered the invitation, then God worked in her until she was ready to attend.

Our job is to sow the seeds. To invite, to share our experiences with our church and then know that God will do the rest. And wouldn't it be wonderful if the church, and by "church" I mean not only St. Stephen's, but also the wider church and all churches, wouldn't it be wonderful if the church was known for its generosity, for its compassion, for its mercy and the joy that comes from sowing those seeds!

You and I, we are the church. We can be the extravagant sower of a great mix of seeds.

Look at God, the sower, "tossing seeds to the wind with a daring and delighted smile on his face, inviting us to toss our own handfuls across the earth and share his joy. Will we?" (*Debie Thomas in JWJ 2023*)