

Deep in the Word – The Green Kingdom

July 16, 2017

An interactive devotional linked to Chandler First Church's July 16 Sunday morning sermon, "The Green Kingdom" based on Isaiah 55:10-13; Psalm 119:105-112; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.

I am a backyard farmer. Over the years, the primary challenge in my back yard has been simply to have grass under my large ficus nitida tree. Now, I love that tree, and my son and I planted it on purpose, but the lovely shade it produces prevents anything from growing in that lovely shade. So . . . I have purchased and planted dichondra seed (not cheap!) and all kinds of shade grasses that the promotions PROMISE will grow into beautiful green yards. I would show you a photo of the results, but I am too proud. Just picture a beautiful tree surrounded by dirt. With some flagstones that my grand-minions placed artfully here and there to break up the expanse of dirt.

Today's message is all about planting. How it is done and what happens to the seeds afterward.

Encounter the Word

Read Matthew 13:1-9.

- What is a parable?
- What four types of soil does Jesus mention?
- What characterizes each?
- What do parables accomplish that simple and direct speech lacks?

Connect with God's Story

- Which of the four types of soil best describes your response to the Gospel when you first heard it?
- What do you have in your life now that gives "depth to your soil" and nurtures your growth?

Engage with the Kingdom

- Can you see and hear Jesus at work in today's world? If so, how?
 - How would you explain this parable to a bunch of kids who don't know anything about planting a field?
 - What other modern example could you use instead?
 - Why do so many people misunderstand the gospels?
 - What "deep roots" help to prevent a believer from falling away? List some:
-
- What worries can choke your growth in Christ?
-
- How can you free your life from these "thorns?"
-
- What "crop" does Jesus want believers to yield?

- What happens to a plant when it does not produce any seeds?

Francis Chan, a pastor and the author of the book *Crazy Love* warns us that we must not assume that we are the good soil. Whenever we read a passage of scripture we need to ask ourselves where we find ourselves in that story. Where are YOU in this story? What type of soil are you?

Read verse 19 again now: “. . . and does not understand it. . .” If you believe that you are the “good soil,” then you have a responsibility to make sure that God’s seed is effective. Is growing. That those who are hearing the Word of God understand and have the opportunity to grow roots so that their baby faith is not extinguished.

So there are two messages here for those of us “who have ears:”

1. We must be ready to receive God’s seed (good soil)
2. We are responsible for those tender seeds around us in danger of being eaten by predators or withering because their roots have not been able to flourish

We are either being sown or we are caring for the seed around us.

If that sounds like too much to handle, remember that last verse of chapter 12—if we want to belong to God’s family, there are some family requirements: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven.”

In the book of Isaiah there is a beautiful promise from God to remind us of how powerful those seeds—the Word of God—are. Read Isaiah 55:10-13 and rewrite it as a prayer. Whatever it is that God is asking us to do, God is there in the middle of it with us.