

**FEED THEM!**  
**7TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**JULY 31, 2011**

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Matthew 14:13–21

*Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!*

Over the past several weeks our Gospel lessons have been the parables of Jesus as shared in the 13th Chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. All those parables lead up to our lesson for today. So let's take a moment to recount those lessons. The first parable was about the soils.

## **I. ALL ABOUT THE DIRT**

A sower went out to sow and seed and some fell by the path, other on rocky ground, and other among thorns, and some also fell on good soil. Jesus went on to explain the parable. The seed is the Gospel. And the soil represents all those that hear it.

The one on the road is the person who hears the message but doesn't understand it. The evil one comes and snatches them away. It's just like birds if you leave any seed uncovered in your garden or lawn.

The seed on the rocky ground springs up fast because the soil is warm. But it has no root. And so it is with those who become excited by the Word but base everything on emotion. When hardship comes or they no longer feel the joy that had originally they depart from the faith. They cannot withstand tribulation or persecution because they have no root. They grow quickly and dry up quickly.

The seed that is sown among the thorns is one that hears the Word but becomes choked out by the things of the world. The cares and concerns of this world fill their hearts and minds.

Finally the one who hears the word and is the good soil, this is the one who hears and understands. He or she bears much fruit and grows in faith and truth. They have a great yield.

The parable shows us four distinct types of soil and four distinct types of people. The Lord knows what type of person we are, and what type of soil we emulate. But please notice one the most profound things about this parable: though the Lord knows the all the soil types, He still sows the Gospel to all. So the lesson for us is to share the Gospel with all types of people. We are not to say, "Well I just don't see how sharing Christ will benefit that person." Or "I really can't imagine that person attending our church". It's not our job to determine the dirt and withhold the Gospel message from anyone. We are to boldly share it with all.

The second thing this parable tells us is how merciful He (✠) is! Not withholding His love from anyone.

## **II. THE GREAT HARVEST**

The second parable was about the man who sowed good wheat seed in his field. And during the night an enemy came and sowed poisonous weed in the field. Some of the workers wanted to pull the weeds. But the owner said no, some of the wheat might be pulled up with it. So let them grow side by side and at harvest we will gather first the weeds and burn them, then we will gather up the wheat into the barn.

The Lord explained the parable. The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, which is Jesus. The field is the world, the wheat represent the children of the kingdom, you and me. But the

one who sows the poisonous weed is the devil. And the weeds are his children. The children of the devil walk among us.

In this parable Jesus is showing us the promise yet to come. Please note in this parable one of the greater truths. Notice in the field there are only two types of seed in the parable. And so there are only really two types of seed in the world. Good seed, children of God and His Kingdom and the children of the devil. All people are either children of God or a child of the devil.

The warning with this parable is that day is coming when believers will be gathered to be with God. But unbelievers will be gathered as well, gathered to spend eternity in hell.

The first parable had its focus on the soil. The second parable has its focus on the sower of the seed.

### III. THE GREAT TREASURE

As you may recall our parable last week was about a pearl of great value and a buried treasure. In both of these examples a man sold all that he had to purchase them. Of course the parable was about how Jesus gave up all to purchase and redeem us.

The second part of that parable was about the dragnet. How on the last day the Lord will send His angels to gather all from the corners of the earth. The evil will be gathered and thrown into the fiery furnace. But God's own will be gathered unto Him.

Hear the deeper truth in this parable. If Jesus is the one who has given all to redeem the world, how sad it will be for Him to see one soul lost. Yet He tells us that on that last day the evil ones shall be cast into fire. God doesn't desire that any should perish. Matthew 18:14 says: ***"Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that anyone of these little ones perish."*** God desire none, not even the littlest among us to perish. And so in the final section of this parable Jesus commissions the disciples to be His householders, to be His Scribes, His mouthpiece. To make sure the Word continues to be preached so that as few as possible perish.

So the 1st parable was about the soil types, individuals and that's us! The 2nd parable was about the sowers, the good sower Jesus and the evil sower the devil. The 3rd parable is about pearl and hidden treasure. It's about the church both visible and invisible and what is coming. It's about the importance and urgency of preaching the Gospel, the benefits of belief and consequences of unbelief. But it's also a commissioning of the disciples. It's their turn to step up and start taking initiative to proclaim the truth. They are commissioned to be scribes of Jesus. A scribe's job was to make new copies of Scripture. They didn't have copy machines in Jesus day, so scribes would copy a document letter by letter and mark by mark. They would count the number of character in each row to make sure it was the same. The disciples were not called to create their own words but to speak the words Jesus had given them. He was preparing them to take His place as teachers. That leads us up to our text today.

### IV. FEED THEM

Now when Jesus heard this, [that is, the news of the execution of John the Baptizer,] he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

But Jesus said, ***"They need not go away; you give them something to eat."***

What do you suppose the disciples thought, after hearing this? How would you respond? What catches you by surprise?

But Jesus said, ***"They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish."***

We find out what they were thinking food. But as we looked back at the previous text for the last month, you've heard most of Matthew 13. You heard the parable of the sower, sowing the Word of the kingdom for a great yield in those who hears the word and understands it.

You heard the parable of the weeds growing together in the kingdom and the separation that will take place on Judgment Day.

And last week you heard of the hidden treasure, the pearl of great value, the parable of the net.

After such a review, is it any clearer what Our Lord intended by His words? "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

Could have the disciple feed the crowds with only 5 loaves and 2 fish? Is it even possible that the disciples had enough money in the treasury to feed 5000 men plus women and children? The number of people present was greater than the population almost every town in the area. Where would they go if they had enough money? They were in a wilderness. Why would Jesus say "You Feed them." Hear how the disciples respond.

"The disciples said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

Here's another one of those greater truths again. Notice that the disciples did finally feed the crowd. They didn't make the bread and fish multiply they simply served what the Lord provided. On their own they could have never fed the crowd.

Our Gospel text for today doesn't explicitly urge us to tell the Good News about Jesus, but the idea is not foreign to the text, especially when connected the preceding chapter.

Even though the disciples didn't know what Jesus meant by something to eat, He used this occasion of the disciples cluelessness to manifest Himself and increase their faith, to feed them and the crowds. After the Resurrection and Ascension, this event likely encouraged them to boldly share their faith.

They shared the good news of the kingdom far and wide, and the good seed that is the Word of the Kingdom and has reached the ends of the earth, even Salem Oregon.

Sharing the faith is an important part of being a Christian. Even though it may not be easy, we have our Lord's promises to encourage us. The same Lord who miraculously multiplied bread and

fish can do wonders with the Word we share! We may be sharing it but He is the one who established it.

Our message may indeed be rejected by those who hear it, just like seed sown along the path, or on rocky ground, or among the thorns. We need not take it personally, for the message is not ours, but the Lord's. The weeds growing in the field of the world are not rejecting us, but rejecting Christ. We pray that the seeds of the Word that we sow would someday bring forth abundant grain.

But the question for today is this, how can we better encourage the members of our congregation and our families to grow in faith? On what occasions do we have to give them something to eat?

One idea is to pray that the Lord will bless you with opportunities to share your faith, to treasure His Word, and opportunity to invite someone to the Divine Service. Another idea is to regularly be strengthened by the very Bread of Life that we share, by taking Holy Communion often. But most of all pray that God would give you boldness to tell of the Good News about Jesus! The Good News that Jesus has died for the sins of the whole world and so that all who would believe in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Please pray with me. Dear Lord Jesus, forgive us. Forgive us because we haven't taken every opportunity to share the message of your love. Forgive us for not realizing the urgency of sharing that message. Forgive us for becoming comfortable in not sharing. We confess that we haven't been as bold as we ought to be. Give us opportunities to share our faith. Help us to treasure your Word and give us the words to invite, family, friends and neighbors to hear Your Word here at Messiah Lutheran. But most of all Lord fill our hearts with your love and Holy Spirit. Fill us with your joy so completely that our tongues will boldly declare the Good News of Salvation that is only in you. In Jesus name, Amen and Amen!

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus, amen.