

Dear Church Family

Here we are starting a new season, one of excitement and anticipation. With the fall kick-off celebration last Sunday comes the time of awareness of what has happened and how that will affect what is yet to come for the coming year.

The harvesting of crops is happening all around us, the result of hard work and dedication by many. Planning the crop, purchasing the seed, preparing the soil and planting seem so simple. The first seed catalogue showing up in late winter brings excitement. Frozen winter ground gives way to the sun as it warms the soil, readying it for the rototiller and spade. Spring weather brings new life bursting out of the dirt and hungry for the sunshine. What smiles we have on our faces as each green leaf of hope reveals itself to the sower!

Today we observe the work of our hands as we gather the fruit of our labors. Each garden has soil, some good, some that is questionable and some that is not good for much. This leads us into the message for the month. We find in three of the gospels the parable of the four soils. We are all responsible for how we hear God's Word as individuals, but we are also the ones called to sow!

Luke 8:4-15

⁴ While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, He told this parable: ⁵ "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When He said this, He called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

⁹ His disciples asked Him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

*'though seeing, they may not see;
though hearing, they may not understand.'*

¹¹ This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the Word of God. ¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the Word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rocky ground

are the ones who receive the Word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the Word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

We are the farmers sowing seeds. Where did we purchase these seeds from? God or the world? Those are our only options. We gauge this by the crop that has been raised. What is the fruit? Love or hate? Compassion or anger? Peace or strife? Clarity or confusion? Grace or judgement? Saving faith or doubt? Where did we plant? In soil prepared by the Heavenly Father, or the soil prepared by the world? Amazingly, some seed fell in unexpected places and flourished.

We as a congregation are responsible for planting the love of God without hesitation or prejudice. He will nurture the good seed and let the bad die. Like any good gardener, we are to know where to plant. God has prepared the soil and revealed it to us by His Spirit. Spending time in the Word and prayer reveals His desire to meet each person where they are at and is essential to showing us the path we are to take to be effective for Him. Remember, *Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet* (Psalms 119:105).

As we build relationships outside the church, those relationships sanctioned by God, we begin sowing seeds of the Spirit and will see the fruit of that at the harvest. Let's together look for the fruit this fall, proof beyond a doubt that God's seed is never wasted. It always produces what it was meant to be. And then let's look to the future, learn from the past years, and be prayerful and intentional about what seeds we plant and where we plant them in the year ahead so that we don't just maintain, but produce more!

Your brother in Christ,

Archie

Call to Action: What does the fruit look like that we as a church have produced? Read Colossians 1:10. From this verse, we learn that bearing good fruit in good works pleases God. And we see that growing in the knowledge of God is tied to bearing that good fruit. What are practical ways we can grow in our knowledge of Him?