

Devotional—Four Week 2

"The Seed"

Matthew 13 (The Message)

A Harvest Story

1-3 At about that same time Jesus left the house and sat on the beach. In no time at all a crowd gathered along the shoreline, forcing him to get into a boat. Using the boat as a pulpit, he addressed his congregation, telling stories.

3-8 "What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.

9 Are you listening to this? Really listening?"

The Meaning of the Harvest Story

18-19 "Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn't take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person's heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road.

20-21 The seed cast in the gravel—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

22 The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the kingdom news, but weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it.

23 The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams."

24-26 He told another story. "God's kingdom is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. That night, while his hired men were asleep, his enemy sowed thistles all through the wheat and slipped away before dawn. When the first green shoots appeared and the grain began to form, the thistles showed up, too.

27 The farmhands came to the farmer and said, 'Master, that was clean seed you planted, wasn't it? Where did these thistles come from?'

28 He answered, 'Some enemy did this.'

"The farmhands asked, 'Should we weed out the thistles?'

29-30 He said, 'No, if you weed the thistles, you'll pull up the wheat, too. Let them grow together until harvest time. Then I'll instruct the harvesters to pull up the thistles and tie them in bundles for the fire, then gather the wheat and put it in the barn.'"

31-32 Another story. "God's kingdom is like a pine nut that a farmer plants. It is quite small as seeds go, but in the course of years it grows into a huge pine tree, and eagles build

36 Jesus dismissed the congregation and went into the house. His disciples came in and said, "Explain to us that story of the thistles in the field."

37-39 So he explained. "The farmer who sows the pure seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the pure seeds are subjects of the kingdom, the thistles are subjects of the Devil, and the enemy who sows them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, the curtain of history. The harvest hands are angels.

40-43 The picture of thistles pulled up and burned is a scene from the final act. The Son of Man will send his angels, weed out the thistles from his kingdom, pitch them in the trash, and be done with them. They are going to complain to high heaven, but nobody is going to listen. At the same time, ripe, holy lives will mature and adorn the kingdom of their Father.

"Are you listening to this? Really listening?"

44 God's kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field for years and then accidentally found by a trespasser. The finder is ecstatic—what a find!—and proceeds to sell everything he owns to raise money and buy that field.

45-46 Or, God's kingdom is like a jewel merchant on the hunt for excellent pearls. Finding one that is flawless, he immediately sells everything and buys it.

47-50 Or, God's kingdom is like a fishnet cast into the sea, catching all kinds of fish. When it is full, it is hauled onto the beach. The good fish are picked out and put in a tub; those unfit to eat are thrown away. That's how it will be when the curtain comes down on history. The angels will come and cull the bad fish and throw them in the garbage. There will be a lot of desperate complaining, but it won't do any good."

51 Jesus asked, **"Are you starting to get a handle on all this?"**

They answered, "Yes."

52 He said, "Then you see how every student well-trained in God's kingdom is like the owner of a general store who can put his hands on anything you need, old or new, exactly when you need it."

Time for personal reflection (Tour Week 2):

Jesus often uses references to farming (i.e. sowing, seed, ripeness, harvest, etc.) in his parables. Breakdown the components of this production of *Godspell*, who's the master? Who's the sower? What's the seed? When's the harvest?

In the parable of the seed, Jesus describes the different types of people sitting in His audience. If I am honest with myself, I can admit that at different moments in my life, I have more than likely been each type of seed. What type of seed am I at the moment? Is this the type of seed I really want to be? If not, what type of seed do I want to be and what do I need to get there?

Jesus asks, "**Are you listening to this? Really listening?**" Am I? Am I really listening to the words that are coming out of my mouth during the show? Am I really listening to what others are saying during the show? Am I taking it all to heart? Am I "**starting to get a handle on all this?**"

Have I found the hidden treasure that is the Kingdom of Heaven? Am I ecstatic about my find? Have I "sold" everything to "buy" the field?

Verse 52 states, "He said, '**Then you see how every student well-trained in God's kingdom is like the owner of a general store who can put his hands on anything you need, old or new, exactly when you need it.**'" Can I say I am a well-trained student? Can I put my hands on anything I need, old or new, exactly when I need it? If not, what do I need to do to get the training I need?