

This week we start our stewardship or pledge season. I thought about presenting you with a boring series about every dollar being a mission dollar. While that is true, I began thinking about seeds and the way seeds were described in the gospels, especially in the way Jesus described them. It dawned on me that we are called to be stewards of seeds. Seeds that are given to us to turn into something bigger than ourselves. Something we are called to turn into something grand.

So our stewardship theme is completely out of my head. (buyer beware!) We are calling this series “Seedy Stewards Sow Something Grand.” Over the next three weeks we will explore stories about seeds and harvests. Today we look at the parable of the sower, next week we will look at that lil ole mustard seed, and the last week we will talk about the plentiful harvest from seeds sown by us and those who’ve gone before. Are you ready? I’m ready, let’s get planting!

We start with The Sower. The parable of the sower is told across all of the synoptic gospels. Mark, Matthew, and Luke. They are called the synoptic gospels because it is clear that sequentially each writer sourced the other. And they always put their own spin on their version. Matthew was the second of the synoptic gospels. Sometimes called Levi, this is the disciple that was called away from the tax collecting business to follow Jesus.

In addition to being a numbers guy. Matthew is also very concerned with tying Jesus to the Kingdom of Heaven. More than the other gospel writers, Matthew will refer often to what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.

Matthew waits until chapter 13 to reveal Jesus’ first parable. Here is the scenario. We have Jesus stepping into a boat. He sits down in the boat and teaches a great crowd gathered along the shore. He speaks of a farmer scattering seed. Some seeds fall on the path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, and some on good soil. It’s the same sower. It’s the same seeds scattered. But the results are very different because the condition of the soils are different.

While this parable teaches us about hearing and responding to the Word of God, it also teaches a profound lesson about stewardship. A steward is someone who faithfully manages what belongs to another. The seed, it belongs to God. The field, it belongs to God. The rain, the growth, and the harvest, they all come from God. But church family, God places something precious into our care: a receptive heart, the truth of His Word, our time, our abilities, our resources, and opportunities to bear fruit for His kingdom.

Let's talk about the use of parables for a minute. Jesus did not invent parables. He used tactics of other philosophers and teachers like Socrates and Plato. The word for Parable in Gk. is "parabole". It means "a placing beside". Where a literary figure or story illumines something "placed beside" it. We used that same tactic today with the object lessons used in the children's message.

A parable is a simple story drawn from ordinary life that reveals a deeper spiritual truth. Jesus uses familiar things in his parables—seed, soil, bread, lamps, vineyards, coins, and shepherds. These were perfect vehicles to allow him to introduce eternal realities in ways His listeners already understood. A parable invited the listener to look beneath the surface, reflect on the message, and recognize where he or she stood before God.

Jesus used parables both to reveal and to test. Those who came with humble, receptive hearts were drawn toward the truth and sought greater understanding; those who remained indifferent could hear the story without receiving its spiritual meaning. If you think about it, a parable acts like seed: its fruit depends upon the condition of the hearer's heart. Jesus wasn't just telling a good story. He was calling people to listen, respond, and be transformed.

That's why the Parable of the Sower is important for stewardship. Before we ask what we will do with our money, time, talents, or opportunities, shouldn't we first ask what we will do with the truth God entrusts to us. Jesus makes it clear in his explanation of speaking in parables. A faithful steward is first responsible to hear well. A receptive heart receives the seed, gives it room to take root, and allows it to produce a harvest that blesses others and glorifies God.

Think about the sower. He does not clutch seeds in his closed fist. He scatters them. He places valuable seeds into the ground, trusting for a harvest. That's an important principle of stewardship: God doesn't bless us just to store it; God wants it to be faithfully invested.

From God we receive things like time to serve, abilities to build up others, material resources allowing needs to be met and ministries to advance. Faithful stewardship begins with opening our hands and saying, "Lord, what You have placed in my care belongs to You. Show me where to sow it." Show me where to sow what you have given me. (say that with me)

It's kind of like the farming version of that saying about boats in a harbor. Seeds kept in the barn will remain safe, but seeds faithfully sown can become a harvest.

After finishing this parable for the crowds, Jesus pulls his disciples aside and explains the parable. The seeds on the path are those who hear the message of the kingdom. They've repeatedly walked on the seeds. Think about how disappointment, harm, habit, pride, or neglect can make a heart resistant to God.

Stewardship must include care of our inner life. Hearing is not exactly the same as receiving. We prepare the soil when we listen humbly, ask for understanding, and act on what God says. The first gift we return to God is an attentive heart.

The seed on rocky ground springs up quickly, but it has no deep root. When trouble or persecution comes because of this new faith, the plant withers away. Faith needs more than inspiration, it needs formation. (repeat) Faith needs to move beyond promise to process that leads to growth.

We call our process the means of grace or staying in love with God. This includes prayers, worship, sacraments, service, witness, and fasting. This is a process that creates roots, it is formed in quiet places that will yield fruit in public places. A strong family, generous living, and lasting ministry cannot be built on a shallow devotion to God.

The seed that springs up and is choked by thorns represent the worries of this life and the folly of pursuing wealth. This plant was alive, but its fruit was choked. Possessions are useful servants, but they can be cruel masters. Worry says, “There will never be enough.” Wealth says, “If I have more, I will finally be secure.” Both worry and wealth can choke out our trust in God.

God calls us to examine what competes for the nourishment of our souls. Our schedules, are they so crowded that prayer is choked? Our budgets, are they shaped more by fear than faith? Our ambitions, are they bearing kingdom fruit, or only feeding the thorns? Good stewardship is not simply adding generosity to an overcrowded life; it is removing whatever keeps generosity, trust, and obedience from flourishing.

At last we get to the good soil. This is the soil that hears the Word, understands it, and produces a crop—one hundred times, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. Fruitfulness is the by-product of faithful reception. The good soil didn’t create the seed’s life; but it received that seed and gave it room to grow.

Now the harvest of the sower was not identical in every situation. Some yielded one hundredfold, another sixtyfold, and another thirtyfold. God isn’t asking you to reproduce someone else’s results but to be faithful with what was entrusted to you. The question is not, “Did I receive what another person received?” but, “Did I faithfully cultivate what God gave me?” (repeat)

In God’s kingdom, faithful stewardship is not simple subtraction. What is surrendered to God becomes seed for multiplication. A meal offered in compassion becomes hope. An hour given in service becomes encouragement. A skill placed at God’s disposal strengthens a ministry. A financial gift helps carry the gospel and helps feed a family, teach a child, or help someone out of addictions.

We don’t control the size or timing of the harvest. That belongs to God. Our responsibility is to sow faithfully, cultivate patiently, and trust Him with the increase. The steward’s calling is not

to manufacture results but to remain obedient. The kingdom grows quietly before it grows visibly. (Repeat)

What does this parable say to us today? I see 4 things.

First, receive the Word. Approach Scripture with humility. Ask, “Lord, what are You saying, and what must I do?”

Second, remove those thorns. Identify one worry, habit, expense, or commitment that is choking spiritual fruit, and surrender it to God.

Third, Sow what you have. Choose a concrete act of stewardship each week using your time, talent, testimony, or treasure.

Finally, Trust the harvest to God. Refuse comparison and discouragement. Be faithful where you are and let God bring the increase.

Jesus ends the parable with a call: “Whoever has ears, let them hear.” The issue is not a lack of seed. There are plenty of seeds. I wise person once said, “give me seeds not trees”. Also, “God has plenty of seeds”. Church family, God is still speaking. Will those words remain on the surface, wither under pressure, be choked by competing loyalties, or take root and bear fruit.

I don’t know about you, but I want to place my whole lives before the Lord. I want to receive that seed in the soil of my heart. I want to sow generously, cultivate faithfully, and trust expectantly. We may not see every result, but no act of faithful stewardship is wasted in the hands of God. He is able to turn surrendered seed into an abundant harvest for His glory.

Church family let’s not leave this Word just on the surface of our hearts. Let’s decide today what faithful stewardship will look like in our lives. Let’s ask God to show us one gift placed in

our hands and the one place where it needs to be sown. Then let's respond with obedience—not someday, but now.

How can we do this? Let's commit our time: Let's give a specific hour this week to prayer, service, encouragement, or helping someone in need. **Let's commit our talents:** Offer an ability God has given you to strengthen the church or bless your community. **Let's commit our treasure:** Let this be the year to choose a generous, intentional pledge that supports ministry and meets a real need. **Let's commit our testimony:** Share with one person what God has done in your life.

What seed will you sow, where will you sow it, and when will you begin?

Let us pray. Lord with come to you with open hearts and open hands. Hear our hearts as we say: "Everything I am and everything I have belongs to You. Make me good soil, make me a faithful sower, and use my life to produce a harvest for Your kingdom." Amen.