Sermon July 16, 2017

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (The Sower)

Rev. Vikki Clayton

“A Sower went out to sow.”

Our home has a sunroom with windows that face out onto our backyard patio. I go to this room every morning to pray, but before I sit down to pray, I spread a little birdseed on the patio. I like watching the birds come to feed as I do my morning prayers.

Sometimes beautiful cardinals come by, scaring the little chickadees away. Isn’t it odd that the smallest birds come to eat first? No fear.

The trio of lady doves cautiously makes their way over, cooing at the sight of fresh seed.

A chipmunk and its buddy run in, grab a bite, and then run away.

It can get to be a real madhouse sometimes. Distracting me from focusing on the readings for the day.

But I encourage their presence. For some reason this sideshow fills me with a sense of peace.

Now, I realize this story is about intentionally feeding the birds and small animals. The seeds I place on the patio are not intended to be there to grow into plants; they’re there to provide food.

Every animal and bird that comes by comes for one reason, to eat.

They even squawk at me through the window when I’m a little late in feeding them.

It’s become a daily rhythm we share – they notice when the rhythm is off. I notice when the rhythm is off too. I sense something is wrong if I’m distracted and forget to feed them.

And here’s the main difference between the Sower in our parable today and us: the rhythm of the Sower is constant. The Sower never forgets to sow.

Author, Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor, writes about her unique perspective on the parable of the Sower. She writes of her response when hearing this parable:  
“I started worrying about what kind of ground I was on with God… I started worrying about how I could turn myself into a well-tilled, well-weeded, well-fertilized field for the sowing of God’s word…I hear it as a challenge to be different, as a call to improve my life…”

And I believe most of us agree with her.

But then she goes on to write:

For centuries this parable has been known as the parable of the Sower.

“… which means there’s a chance, just a chance, that we have got it all backwards.”

“We hear the story and think it’s about us…What if it’s no about us at all, but about the sower? The extravagance of a sower who does not seem to be fazed by such concerns [as our successes, failures - rocks, thorns, and birds], who flings seed everywhere, wastes it with holy abandon…confident that there is enough seed to go around, that there is plenty…to fill every barn in the neighborhood to the rafters.”

Whoa! Can you imagine this happening in your life? God continually calling you to hear His words of hope and love; God starting each new day by sowing these seeds of life for you?

Even on the days when you are too tired or busy to stop and feel them. Even on the days when your anger over something that happened prevents you feeling his presence. Even on the days when you throw your hands up in the air and say, “Enough, let the birds take them. I don’t need them anymore. I can feed myself.”

God continues to sow for us the seeds of life, with no concern about whether we are ready to receive them or not. He sows them with abandon and joy! “Hallelujah!

Here you go! Don’t worry; I have more than enough. Don’t worry; I’ll come by tomorrow too.”

“Confident that there is enough seed to go around.”

Accepting a God who accepts us, who meets us where we are, who believes He is not wasting His time with us, means we are asked to look at ourselves and our relationship with Him in a new way.

It’s about breaking down the confining walls we build around our heart. Walls we construct to hide our feelings of unworthiness or of not being right with God.

Accepting God as the Sower who continually calls us means not being so hard on ourselves. The opportunity to come meet Him is always present. He knows there will be days when we are surrounded by briars, when it’s too hard for us to remove the rocks, when we feel it is so much easier to let the birds feast. He knows.

This is the nature of our God.

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,

making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace…”