

Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church
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July 13, 2014
Newark, Delaware

Psalm 65:9-13
Matthew 13:1-9

Sow What?

Pat and I didn't sow seeds this spring. We had just moved to Ware Retirement Village. However, we did plant some flowers in pots ... and they are flourishing.

But over the years we have planted

Lettuce -- Beans -- Tomatoes -- Zucchini -- Flowers.

That's tough work. Well, not so much the planting -- but the maintaining.

**And what did we harvest? Certainly beans.
Flowers.**

**Pat and I did all right with those.
Pat does exceptionally well with herbs, too.**

And zucchini. Over the years we have harvested many Zucchini. Big zucchini. But I've discovered a family can only eat so many zucchini!

**In the scripture lesson this morning,
Jesus was speaking from a boat.**

The crowd gathered around him there on the shore.

From a boat, you would think that Jesus would be talking about fish and anglers -- about nets and water ...

**Rather he points out there -- on the hillside --
to the sower -- sowing seeds.**

Look -- some of the seed falls on the hard path and the birds swoop down and eat those seeds.

**Don't worry ... the sower keeps sowing.
Some seed falls on rocky ground -- not enough soil for them to sink
their roots, so they grow-up quickly --
then wither away and die.**

Never fear. The sower keeps sowing.

Some seed falls among thorns. The sprouts get choked-out and die.

**Other seed falls on GOOD SOIL...
And they have an excellent harvest.
Bushels and bushels of grain.
A whole lot of food.**

Jesus concludes, YOU WHO HAVE EARS -- HEAR!

Hear what?

Sow what?

And Harvest what?

NOTE FIRST -- THE SOWER SOWED.

**That's the sower's business ...
Get the seed into the ground.
Hard ground? Rocky ground?
Thorny?**

No matter ... get the seed into the ground.

Circling birds swoop-down and pick-up the seed?

**Don't waste time shooing the birds away.
But sow the seeds.**

**You see, the sower isn't distracted by side issues such as wasted seed
And conserving seed
And exploring more economical ways for
broadcasting the seed ...**

**BECAUSE JESUS WANTS US TO CATCH ONE ALL
IMPORTANT POINT --**

GET THE SEED INTO THE GROUND!

That's the crucial thing.

Getting the seed planted.

**Only then, can there be any chance of a
harvest.**

BUT SOW WHAT?

Well, I remember an old hymn we used to sing --

“Sowing in the morning, sowing seeds of kindness.”

There are many good things to be planted -- Kindness is one.

Let me speak of several others.

SOW HOSPITALITY.

**In many parts of the ancient world, hospitality was and continues to
be the law of the land.**

After all, there were few wayside inns. No hotels or motels.

**Therefore, it wasn't simply common courtesy to welcome a stranger
at your door, but it was a sacred obligation.**

Paul urges Christians in Rome to extend hospitality to strangers.

In addition, the author of the book of Hebrews adds a bonus ...

**“Sometimes those who have shown hospitality to
strangers have entertained angels without knowing it.”
Hebrews 13:2**

**I know you of Head of Christiana have entertained many angels for
you are known for your hospitality.**

**You work with the homeless – you feed the homeless at Hope
Dining room and Elkton Community Kitchen.**

Your leadership in the Annual Trail race attests to your hospitality ... waving people in through the gates ... and helping them park ... and registering ... and answering endless questions ... and then the bountiful food you prepare for strangers. Head of Christiana knows HOSPITALITY

Many years ago, you extended hospitality, risked, and took the lead in rallying around Carl Mazza, and Meeting Ground was born.

I recall some years ago when I was working for Buckhorn Children's Center/The Presbyterian Child Welfare Agency, in eastern Kentucky, a fifteen year-old boy ran away from the center.

(I forget his name -- we'll call him Bill.)

Everyone was looking for Bill.

**Then a phone call come from a man up Squabble Creek -
"We have one of your boys up here...Bill's his name. He says he ran away.**

"Do you want us to drive him back down to the Center? Or do you want to come up and get him?"

"I'll be up right away," staff leader Jerry Cantrell said.

Well, don't come too fast. My wife is just taking pies from the oven and she wants Bill to try her pie.

"You come on up -- we will have the coffee pot on. Have some pie with us."

**SOW HOSPITALITY. WELCOME STRANGERS.
ENTERTAIN ANGELS UNAWARE.**

And also, SOW COMPASSION.

You of Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church are a community. Neighbors. Church family.

"You belong to one another in enduring/winning ways.

"O love that will not let me go" is the way the hymn puts it.

...and it is **COMPASSION** that grasps you and links you.

Many members have affirmed, We have been through a lot together.
Yes -- and for over 300 years.

COMPASSION is the energy that motivates you to reach to others
and to stand with others and to lift others up and to help others out.

It is with compassion that you care for the most vulnerable.

For children

For the disabled.

The elderly

The sick and dying.

The Psalmist sings --

“As a father -- a mother -- has compassion on their children, so the
Lord has compassion on those who reverence him.”

Jesus was moved with compassion as he walked among the ill, the
poor, and the disabled.

He touched them --

Touched even those deemed untouchable

Moved by compassion, he healed them.

A mother reported that she had sent her 8 year old daughter next
door to a friend’s home to play for an hour.

I needed a break, she said. My daughter was being a pest.

I had to get her out of my hair for a time.

But the young daughter was gone a longer time than expected and
mother began to worry.

She dashed out the front door to find her daughter ...
and there was the child ... waltzing-up the front steps.

“Where have you been? You were gone too long.

I was worried.”

“Oh, Bonnie’s doll broke her arm -- “I had to help her.”

And mom said something like -- “You don’t know how to fix a doll, do you?”

“Oh, she said, “I helped Bonnie cry.”

SOW COMPASSION.

AND ALSO, SOW JUSTICE.

The Old Testament prophet cried ...

“God has shown you -- men and women -- what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

(Micah 6:8)

And Amos challenged -- “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)

Micah and Amos were speaking and acting for those who have no voice and little power.

People neglected and abused by the powers and principalities of the day.

People passed-by them on the other side.

Yet these prophets envisioned a time when tables would be turned.

You see, **JUSTICE -- IS TO SORT-OUT WHAT BELONGS TO WHOM AND TO RETURN IT TO THEM.**

To sow justice -- is to expect things to change.

...And to work for change so more and more people may live abundantly.

To identify and to practice deeds that touch people and kindle hope.

Several years ago, as I was driving home to Wilmington on I-95, and took the Delaware Ave. exit – went on up the ramp ... along there ... at the traffic signals there are often people with signs ... hoping ...and begging.

I saw a young woman who was there often – she held a small, hand-lettered sign ...

PLEASE HELP ME FEED MY KIDS.

She would just stand there. Stoic.

People stopped for the light and traffic backed up.

Oh how I hated to be there next to her. I stared straight ahead pretending not to notice.

My thoughts ran along these lines:

Why don't you get a job?

Who is taking care of your kids?

I'm in the wrong lane of traffic.

I give to the church, for crying out loud.

I give to Meeting Ground
and they help the homeless.

To give her money would be like throwing money into the wind.

And she just would stand there holding that sign --

AND NOBODY GAVE HER ANYTHING...AT LEAST AS FAR AS I COULD SEE.

Except one time -- there -- in the car ahead of me -- the person reached-out with some money -- there was contact. A word. A slight smile a wave ... and traffic moved along.

**JUSTICE IS SORTING OUT WHAT BELONGS TO WHOM ...
AND GIVING IT TO THEM.**

And I thought about sowing seeds -

And birds swooping down and picking them up.

And rocky ground

And thorny ground.

But the sower keeps sowing -

Sowing hospitality

Sowing kindness.

Sowing compassion.

Sowing justice.

We need not give so much attention to calculating results.

Simply sow!

Perhaps everyone in that line of traffic would have pulled-out a dollar or two, reached-out, and made contact.

But really, the only person I can change -- is to change MYSELF TO FIND A WAY. To take a risk.

I'm so proud of our Head of Christiana children and leaders going to Hope Dining Room this past Friday ... and serving. Being WITH some of the least. One reported, "I can't imagine not having a home."

SOW KINDNESS – BE KIND

SOW HOSPITALITY – BE HOSPITABLE.

SOW COMPASSION – BE COMPASSIONATE

SOW JUSTICE ... BE JUST.

You are doing the work of Jesus.

You are the hands and feet and heart of the Master.

And your courage is blessed. Well done, good and faithful servants.

Grace to you.