

In the last two weeks, in our ongoing stewardship series “From Seed to Feast,” we have reflected on the powerful metaphor of the seed and soil.

The first week, we learned how the blessings God bestows upon us often present themselves not as immediate gifts but as seeds—tokens of potential, waiting for our nurturing and care to come to fruition. And last week, we further explored the vital role that soil plays in the realization of a seed’s potential. Drawing parallels from the Parable of the Sower, we were reminded that while we all possess seeds of talents, resources, dreams, and goodness, the quality and nature of the soil—our environments, relationships, and influences—largely dictate their growth.

With this foundational understanding of the gift of the seed and the significance of healthy soil, we move into the next topic: Nurturing. If our seeds are the blessings and potential God has graced us with, nurturing these gifts and blessings is our responsibility to ensure we reach our full potential and accomplish our purposes in this life. We all have a small window of time and opportunity to make the best of our lives, and nurturing who we are and what we have to accomplish what God desires for us is the key.

How do we do this? That is the question for us today. The Scripture we studied last week will help us reflect on this matter again. This is Matthew 13: 3-8, where Jesus said,

“Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

In this parable, Jesus shares a teaching to highlight that a seed’s growth depends on the soil’s quality. Later, he explained that the different types of soil represent the conditions of our hearts, and our receptiveness to God’s grace determines his blessings on our lives.

With this in mind, now envision God the Father being the Sower, generously casting blessings upon us; Jesus as the Seed, embodying God’s word and love; and the Holy Spirit, our Gardener, guiding, nourishing, and empowering us, making sure we are on the right path to bear fruit.

What does this mean to us? The apostle Paul gives us more insight into this when he told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:9, “For we are God’s co-workers, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

Paul’s words to the Corinthians, “For we are God’s co-workers,” state our active role in God’s plan for our lives. We are not passive recipients of God’s grace and blessings; we are partners, co-gardeners actively working alongside him to bring and spread love to all people. As co-gardeners, our calling is to prepare, plant, and nurture, shaping our spiritual landscapes and impacting those around us, including the people and places God has entrusted us, like our family, church, and community.

So, taking Jesus's Parable of the Sower forward, not only do we need to find good soil for seeds to grow, but we also need to become active co-gardeners with God.

If we are to understand ourselves as co-workers or co-gardeners with God, we need to be clear about what a gardener does. Gardeners recognize the significance of preparing the soil even before planting. They invest time in understanding the needs of the seeds they sow, ensuring the environment is conducive to growth. This involves removing weeds, ensuring proper drainage, and protecting seeds from pests. The gardener's effort doesn't stop at planting; it is only the beginning. The ongoing nurturing, watering, and tending to the seedling ensure its healthy growth.

This means that God calls us to be gardeners of our lives, the people in our lives, the places where we belong, and everything he has entrusted and blessed us with. As gardeners, we are not mere bystanders. Instead, we are called to actively cultivate nourishment, spread goodness, and make the world better for everyone.

Think of it this way: Every choice we make shapes our spiritual growth. As stewards of God's blessings, we must ask: Are we nurturing our spiritual gardens? Are we removing negativity and seeking wisdom to enhance our growth and bless others?"

As we can see, the act of nurturing is not passive. It demands intention, patience, perseverance, a strong drive to nurture our seeds and soil, and an intentional partnership with God.

But what happens when we neglect our role as gardeners and sow our gifts, time, resources, or energy on infertile grounds or amidst thorns? Proverbs 4:23 reminds us, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

This Scripture talks about our responsibility of guarding our hearts because from it flows life. This kind of wisdom highlights that our role as gardeners is not just about diligence but also about vigilance. Just as gardeners protect their gardens from external threats, we must guard our hearts and souls against environments or relationships that may drain our energy or deviate us from God's purpose.

This is so important because just as neglected soil can become barren or overrun with weeds, a neglected heart, family, church, or environment can become overrun with discouragement, despair, and negativity. And this negligence doesn't just impact us alone; we are also stewards of what happens to others. If we are not careful where and how we invest our resources, we might end up inhibiting our growth and affecting those around us. Our words, actions, and attitudes can either nourish or poison the soil for those around us, too. For instance, consistently investing our energy and resources in toxic environments or relationships may not only hinder our spiritual growth but might also deprive our loved ones, community, and church of the gifts and talents God has blessed us with.

In essence, this means that just as God calls us to be diligent co-workers with him, we are also called to be vigilant guardians to maintain the health of the soil so seeds may grow and thrive and bear fruit.

So, ask yourself this question: Am I creating an environment where I and others can grow, where the seeds of potential can sprout and flourish? We should all strive to be individuals who promote growth and share in the joy of each other's harvests.

The last point I want to share is that being in healthy soil also means recognizing when we need replenishment. Every so often, the soil needs to be turned and fertilized. In our lives, this translates to times of rest and moments of reconnecting with God's purpose for us. We need to identify when we are running low on spiritual nutrients and then seek replenishment from God's word, sacraments, and our community. The best fertilizers for our spiritual well-being are prayer, service, generosity, sharing our faith, and worshiping with our faith community.

My friends, if you feel wasted or have a grim future due to your current adverse circumstance, please know there is hope; there is always hope and a future for God's people. Just as a gardener can rejuvenate a neglected patch of land with effort and care, we, too, can turn things around. With reflection, prayer, and realignment with God's purpose, we can begin to sow our seeds in fertile grounds and foster relationships that enrich us. We can become the gardeners who, through diligent and vigilant care, ensure that the seeds of God's blessings in our lives find the best soil and environment to flourish.

Here is the invitation and good news: Let us remember that while God provides the seed and the soil, we have an active role as co-gardeners. So, let us embrace this role with intentionality, care, and faith. Our journey as disciples requires both diligence and vigilance.

And if you feel that you have planted your seeds in less-than-ideal soil or neglected your soil's health, it is never too late to start nurturing. God's grace is abundant, and his mercy is unending. God desires for us to yield a harvest, regardless of when we begin. This is good news for all of us. If we do all this, we will find that our life will flourish and become a beacon, inspiring others to embark on their journeys from seed to feast. Amen.