

Today, we embark on a new sermon series on stewardship titled “From Seed to Feast: Cultivating a Heart for Giving.” Each year, as a spiritual community, we talk about stewardship, reflecting and praying over our commitment for the year ahead. We contemplate how we can serve, participate, give, witness, and pray more profoundly. Specifically, we are also preparing to submit our pledges in the form of tithes and offerings, which will help shape the church’s budget for 2024.

But why “From Seed to Feast”? This theme resonates deeply because it captures the essence of our spiritual journey with God. Every blessing begins with a promise—a gesture of love—that blossoms into something wondrous given time and nurture, like a seed that, against all odds, transforms into fruit, nourishing not just one but many. Yes, we all yearn to sit at the grand feast, but to get there, we must first commit to the process: the planting, the nurturing, and ultimately, the harvesting.

As we launch this series, our first focus is on the beginning: the seed. While the overarching theme is our pledges, this lesson holds relevance beyond that. It touches various corners of our lives, areas that might be seeking our attention, our care, and our dedication. So, let us explore, reflect, and grow together in this journey from seed to feast as we talk about “The Seed.”

The Bible teaches many parables and lessons using agricultural examples to convey deeper spiritual truths. One of the most recurrent of these examples is that of the seed. From the Old Testament to the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, the imagery of seeds carries messages of hope, growth, potential, and transformation.

For example, in the beginning in the book of Genesis, God’s command to every living organism is to be fruitful and multiply and for each plant to yield fruit according to its seed. “Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so.” (Genesis 1:11). This very act of Creation highlights the principle of life embedded in seeds, wherein lies the potential for growth and multiplication.

In the New Testament, Jesus uses the metaphor of a tiny mustard seed to convey a profound message about faith. Although it appears insignificant, this seed possesses the remarkable potential to grow into a vast tree, offering shelter to many. Through this, Jesus emphasizes that even the smallest measure of faith can lead to monumental growth and transformation in our lives and the lives of others.

So, the narrative of seeds in the Bible develops a story of potential, faith, response, and profound transformation, and that every seed contains a potential blessing.

With this in mind, the question for us today is: What seeds has God given you that are promised blessings awaiting your faith, trust, response, and commitment to come to fruition?

Let’s explore this to understand what this means. For this, our Scripture today is 2 Corinthians 9:6-10,

“The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, “He scatters abroad; he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”

In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul draws a vivid picture of the spiritual and practical principles of sowing and reaping using agricultural references. Paul encourages the Corinthians to live generously, making the clear analogy to a farmer sowing seeds. Just as a farmer understands that he or she must sow abundantly to reap abundantly, we should recognize that our actions, especially in what we willingly give and do in service to God and others, also bear fruit. Paul’s encouraging word is clear, “one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” This means the more we sow in terms of faith, commitment, and actions aligning with God’s will, the more we will reap blessings.

By logic, we can assume the opposite is true, too. If we keep the seeds stored or saved away or throw and plant very few seeds just every now and then, the harvest will be scarce.

So, what does this mean to us in practical terms? When Paul says, “the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully,” he isn’t merely talking about money or possessions. He is speaking to a greater spiritual principle: that every promise God has made to us, every blessing he has in store for us, starts as a seed.

Imagine you have been given a small bag of seeds. You have the choice: let them gather dust on a shelf or plant them, nurturing their growth. In our lives, these seeds could be our talents, our time, or even our compassion. This means that God often gives us seeds rather than immediate blessings. These seeds symbolize potential blessings that await our active commitment. They signify our partnership role with God in realizing his promises in our lives.

But a seed does not grow unless it is sown, right? For example, many people expect instant blessings after prayer, overlooking their role in nurturing these blessings. Let’s consider a real-life situation: a troubled marriage. While prayers offer guidance and strength, action—like attending counseling or spending quality time together—is the act of “sowing” that can lead to the “reaping” of a renewed relationship. Just as sowing precedes reaping in agriculture, blessings often demand our active participation in life, too. All the potential for a blessed marriage is there as we follow God’s wisdom, but we can’t reap the blessings without sowing the seeds first and tending to their growth. Reaping and sowing do not happen at the same time. First, you sow, then you reap.

Jesus himself illustrated this principle profoundly in John 12:24 when he spoke about the life cycle of a grain of wheat, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit.” Here, Jesus was

specifically talking about his death and resurrection and that just as a seed must be buried and die to its former state to yield a new harvest, he had to undergo death to bring forth the promise of eternal life for humanity. This principle also extends to our lives: sometimes, growth and blessings demand sacrifice as Jesus did. In this sense, sowing the seed means you have to put in the time, work, dedication, and resources before you get to the feast.

This seed and sowing stuff is not easy, but it is what all the blessings are made of. All good relationships, achievements, and transformations come to us through small seeds that were not stored away but planted with a purpose.

The last thing I want to say is that you reap what you sow but also where you sow. Think about it this way: You can't sow all your time, energy, resources, and attention at work and think you are going to reap from your family. You may get the promotion or have a great business, but not the hugs, kisses, and treasured memories from your family that make life worth living. In the same way, you can't spend all your time, energy, resources, and attention away from the church and expect to come to experience a growing and thriving church when you show up. Just as families grow healthy not because they don't struggle but because they stay together and figure out a way through challenges together, churches grow and overcome obstacles because they stay together, serve together, give generously, and provide for the needs of each other together.

My friends, everything God has promised us is contained in something we already have or have been gifted that holds the power to manifest God's blessings in our lives. Seeds carry the weight of all of God's promises. Every seed contains the promise of fruit, a blessing, new life, and new beginnings. Whatever the promise is, it starts with a seed.

So, ask yourself this question, "What seeds lie dormant in my life right now?" It could be something you know, an experience you have had, a lesson you have learned, or even something you own. What we need to do with it is take it and plant it so it can grow and give us fruit. This may look like dedicating your time to doing something for others, helping or leading a ministry at church, reading with children at a local school, creating a space for youth to have a healthy environment to be with their friends, using and investing your money in what God is already doing to continue the good work. All those small seeds within us are the means through which God unleashes incredible blessings in our lives that bless other people, too. Those are the seeds we need to plant and put to work.

In conclusion, the good news is that the Scriptures remind us that the seeds we hold within us, granted by God's grace, are not just tokens of blessings to come but are also challenges that beckon our active participation. As we sow with intention, faith, and commitment, we nurture God's vision for our lives. And the invitation is for us to remember always that our smallest acts, fueled by faith and love, can create ripples of change, touching lives in ways we might never see.

I pray that after today, you may be inspired to sow the seeds God has entrusted you with, including your pledges, to nurture them with care, and to watch in wonder as they blossom into the blessings they were always destined to be. Amen.