

Last week, we started our stewardship series “From Seed to Feast.” In our first message, we learned about the incredible power and potential of the seed. In agriculture, seeds hold the potential for bountiful harvests. In our lives, seeds symbolize the promised blessings of God for us. I explained that God’s blessings often come in the form of seeds rather than immediate blessings. These potential blessings await our active commitment to partner with God in realizing his promises in our lives.

For this second message, we are focusing on the soil because a seed does not grow unless it is sown in good, healthy soil. Imagine that you have a seed, pristine and full of promise. But the fate of this seed isn’t exclusively determined by its inherent goodness. Its true potential can only be unlocked when it finds itself in the right soil. While we understand that the seed holds the promise, the soil determines its fruition. It is not only about what you plant but where you plant it.

This is significant to us because we can also find parallels to this in our lives. As I mentioned last week, we each carry seeds within us—gifts, talents, dreams, and potentials granted by God. But if we find ourselves in the wrong environment, amongst negativity and pessimism, our growth is restricted, and our blossoming is delayed. Not because our seed lacks value or potential but because the weeds and thorns of doubt and discouragement suffocate it.

So, this means we must pay attention to where we plant ourselves and the resources that God has given us. To learn about this, we are listening to what Jesus said about the importance of good soil.

In Matthew 13: 3-8, Jesus taught a parable of a farmer who sowed his seeds in different types of soil. While the seeds remained the same, their outcomes varied based on the soil they found. Here is what he 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 is speaking about a farmer who sowed seeds. Some landed along the path, some on rocky ground, others among thorns, and some in fertile soil. Later on, Jesus explained the meaning of this parable, saying,

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields

nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Jesus is explaining that the seed is the Word of God, and the different types of soil represent the conditions of our hearts. He clearly points out that a seed’s growth is determined by the soil quality, whether the soil is welcoming or hostile to the seed. The same seed produced varied results based on the type of soil it was planted in. When the soil is good and healthy, the seed “bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold.”

This parable, while directly speaking about the Word of God and our heart’s receptiveness, offers a universal lesson applicable to all areas of our lives. By illustrating the profound truth of how the environment, community, and influences significantly impact the fruitfulness of God’s Word in our lives, our personal and spiritual growth is also affected by the same or similar factors: environment, community, and influences. This means we can’t only talk or focus on the promise of the seed (blessing); we also need to be careful about the quality of the soil where we invest ourselves just as much. A potent seed in a barren or hostile ground will struggle to sprout if not die. For many people, their problem is not the lack of resources but wasting them away on things and people who are barren lands.

Think of it this way: If our seeds are our God-given talents, resources, time, and any promised blessing, the conditions in which we plant our seeds—the relationships we foster, the environments we immerse ourselves in, and the priorities we set—also play a crucial role in determining the harvest, the outcomes in our lives as men, women, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, friends and neighbors. In this sense, each of us is the product of our environment to a great extent.

With this in mind, consider the blessings that God has entrusted to you, including your life, time, talents, resources, and energy. Where are you planting them? Are you sowing into rich, fertile soil that will nurture and support growth? Or are you scattering them on rocky, thorny ground, where they will struggle to take root?

If you remember, last week, I said that we reap what we sow but also where we sow and gave you an example, saying, “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 God, the people who love you, and your church family and expect to have a healthy, spiritual, and balanced life.

So, ask yourself: Am I nurturing my God-given potential in good soil? Am I surrounding myself with individuals and environments that inspire growth, faith, and positivity? Or am I letting the thorns of negativity, doubt, and discouragement choke my spirit, cloud my judgment, and discourage my future?

These questions are critical because we all come across people and places who might drain our enthusiasm, cast shadows over our dreams, or belittle our faith. Sometimes, avoiding or distancing ourselves from such environments is impossible, especially at work, school, or even our homes. Nevertheless, it is essential for our well-being to recognize these influences and be careful not to become overwhelmed and consumed by them.

The point is that the soil where we plant ourselves matters because the soil is what feeds the seed and ultimately determines the kind of person we become (or not) and whether we fulfill God's plans for our lives. If the soil is unhealthy, the seed becomes malnourished and may go wasted. This is what Jesus was talking about in the Parable of the Sower: every growth begins with good soil. We know what he said: some seeds grew and produced great fruit; others, nada. The teaching was that the soil is what made the difference.

What should we do, then? We must be intentional about cherishing and nurturing the "good soil" in our lives—the friends, family, and fellow believers who uplift, encourage, and believe in us. Investing in these relationships is like tending to fertile ground, ensuring that your seeds, God's promised blessings, grow and bear fruit. When you take care of the good soil, the good soil takes care of you.

I have seen and experienced this in my own life. I am fortunate to have been nurtured in an environment of faith and positivity. I owe much of who I am to those who believed in me, who cheered and encouraged me. Against many odds, I found myself in good soil throughout my life. I am who I am because of my mom and grandmother, some uncles and aunts, friends and colleagues. This does not mean I was not exposed to unhealthy environments, but that the good ones prevailed because I chose them.

My friends, this is what we need to do: Let's not neglect our blessings or take them for granted—the family, friends, and faith community God graced us with. Let's not neglect the people and places that give us life—including our church. Show up, stay committed, get involved, and invest your time, energy, and resources with the people and in the places that God has entrusted you and given you as blessings. That is what it means to be a steward, someone who looks after what has been entrusted to him or her.

Here is the invitation and good news: Weed out negativity and remove yourself from people and places that are suffocating your blessings. Instead, plant yourself amongst the hopeful, water your dreams with faith, and trust in God's grace to do the rest. This will make your seeds not only grow but thrive, bearing fruits of love, joy, peace, and righteousness. So, ensure that your seeds – gifts, talents, and potential – are sown in the most nurturing soil. Invest in the relationships and environments that breathe life into you. And let's cultivate together relationships that elevate all of us. Let's embrace and support each other and our church as a community that believes in boundless possibilities. Let's cherish those who genuinely wish for our growth. And the good news is that as we align ourselves with God's purpose and plant our seeds in fertile soil, we pave the way for a bountiful harvest in our lives, church, and in the lives of those we touch.