



SERIES: A SEASON OF HOPE

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Monday, December 21, 2020

Scripture: Matthew 13:3-9

TITLE: Go Plant A Seed

Have you ever built a house? I haven't, but I know a lot of people who are in the industry of home construction. And if there's one thing I've learned about home building, it takes planning, intentionality, and the ability to be flexible as problems arise.

You know, building a house is a lot like outreach. I think most people would prefer outreach to be the job of the evangelist -- the person who will fill stadiums with people, gives a compelling message, and watches thousands of hands go up. I think many people think outreach is the job of a pastor. I mean, what else are they going to do to earn their paycheck? They surely don't work a full five-day week. No! The fact is, they work seven!

But real outreach, what I think is effective outreach, is really daily discipleship. I want to read you a familiar parable that I think illustrates the planning, the intentionality, and the flexibility of effective outreach.

Matthew 13:3b-9 (NLT), "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴ As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ⁹ Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

In Jesus' parable, you see four soils. One soil is hard as a rock, and the seed is quickly carried off by the birds. The second soil is softer, but unfortunately, it's not ready to receive the seed. A third soil was better, but still not ready to let the seed grow into all it was meant to be. But the fourth soil was carefully prepared to receive and grow.

The seed is the Gospel. You and I, as we walk with the lost, we need to be scattering the seed of the Gospel. But if we're not careful, we can be like many people who throw out the Gospel, without preparing the soil to receive it.

This is why outreach is like building a house or, as Jesus puts it here, like gardening. It's true I could build something that resembled a house, without laying a foundation, without following a blueprint, without adapting to the problems that arise, but give one good gust of wind, or one seasonal snow, and the house would fall.

You see, many people will hear the Gospel, and some people will even respond to the Gospel, but as Jesus' parable teaches, there is only one type of soil that actually received it and grew into the plant. The three non-producing soils represent people who were not really saved. But the one person, who is saved, receives it wholly, and allows it to mature.

God is asking you and me to engage in everyday outreach in everyday ways. God is asking you to look for opportunities with your neighbors, and your coworkers, and your family and friends, to invite them into your life through meals, or activities, or coffees, or wherever God orchestrates. But outreach will take time. It'll take some planning. It's going to take intentionality, and it's going to take flexibility, because we are all messy people with different struggles and opportunities. But if we commit to God to the mission that He has placed us in, and we commit to the people that God has put in our lives, we will scatter seeds faithfully, and prepare the soil diligently.

My challenge for you today, is to commit to God, one person that you will disciple at any cost. I challenge you to ask God to prepare their hearts, as you prepare the soil in their lives. Ask God for open doors to share the Gospel, and pray for a heart that is ready to receive the Gospel. Ask God for help, and then go and spend intentional time with them today. I'm excited to hear the stories.