

Christ's Object Lessons Series

02 The Growing Seed

Mark 4:26-29 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ "and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ²⁸ "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. ²⁹ "But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

David and I once planted a garden. We were going to school in Michigan. The university gave an opportunity to the students living in the dorm. For just a little money, I can't remember exactly, but we rented a garden of something like 50 square meters. The university came and plowed the rental gardens with a tractor. Our only job was to plant and reap. In Michigan there are severe winters. When we first went there we wondered why people would go there to settle. But if you just once look at the soil it will not remain a mystery why they settled there. Black. Whatever you want to grow there you can grow it. David's and my garden experience was next to nothing. But planting a garden was a lot of fun. We bought seeds and sowed them and watered them.

What did we plant? Green beans, watermelon, squash, peppers and of course tomatoes. I forgot what else. Fifty square meters is not that big of a place and for us newbie farmers we were just learning. But the garden work was really a pleasant hobby. Every day you go there and pull weeds. You water. And in a short time the seeds sprout. They were like our children. When we looked at those sprouts we couldn't help but think how awesome are the works of God! Green plants sprout forth from nearly black dirt. But how? From a little seed comes a plant. O.K., someone plowed. O.K., there is the sun. O.K., we put the seed in the ground. But what is in the seed that such a thing happens? Just a little before the seed was a dead object. Not it is living. How can it be? Is there a brain in the seed? No!

There is a life principle in the seed. But neither you nor I can awaken that life principle. No. Only the Creator can awaken the life principle in it. In Jesus' parable, we see God working day and night in nature. Nature doesn't work by itself, life doesn't happen. There is a power coming constantly from God.

We loved to watch the development of the plants. But when we went over there to water, what were we searching for? Correct. Produce. The one who plants a garden wants to see produce.

The tomatoes and green beans came out quickly. The squash was the fastest growing. Over there in Michigan they have a type of squash that we don't find here. They get very big. In just a few days they grow from being the width of your hand to the size of your calf. We couldn't eat it all. We gave it to our neighbors. The peppers were interesting though. We planted them. Like the other plants they sprouted and grew. But there were no peppers. We waited and waited. No peppers. Perhaps we made a mistake. In one corner of our garden we put fertilizer and we

probably burned the soil because nothing came out from there. But what mistake did we make with the peppers? Finally, at the end of the season, suddenly the peppers came out very nicely.

Mark 4:26-29 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ "and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ²⁸ "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. ²⁹ "But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

In the parable, who puts in the sickle? Whose garden is it?

Matthew 9:38 "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

The Lord of the harvest is Jesus Christ. He doesn't sleep. He watches continuously. Jesus knows how the seed sprouts. Thus in the parable the one who sows the seeds is not Jesus, it is His followers. We plant the seeds of God's word as disciples of Jesus. God is waiting for produce from every planted seed. We, as individuals, are the produce of someone else's planting. Therefore the Lord is expecting produce, both from the seeds we planted and from us. O.K., what kind of produce does the Lord expect from us?

Isaiah 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

What does the Lord expect? He expects righteousness. He expects praise, that is praise from those who appreciate His goodness. God used the concepts of fields, sowing and reaping in the Old Testament book of Isaiah to explain spiritual subjects. Jesus did not present in His parables concepts that were completely foreign to His hearers. As we will see, the Old Testament frequently uses these motifs.

The Lord expects righteousness. Some people think that if they mind their own business and if they don't harm someone else that this is righteousness. They say, "I am good. I live my own life and I take care of myself, I don't harm others and I don't mess in their business." But the Lord did not create us to please ourselves.

Isaiah 55:10-11 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, ¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

The seed gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater. The Lord expects more than that we only live for ourselves. We must give seed again and bread. The Christian, in this world, represents

Christ. Our work is to win others for Christ. If the plant does not grow, it dies. Growth cannot take place in the selfish life. The kingdom of God is founded on self-sacrificing love. This unselfishness was shown in the life of Christ. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, forget yourself and work to help others. Talk of Christ's love. Pray and work to save the lost. The more you receive of the Spirit of Christ you will grow. Your character will develop. What is the fruit of the Spirit?

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

There is something you must not forget while sowing the seeds of God's word in people's hearts. You can sow, but you cannot develop the seed that is sown. That is God's work. In the same way that we cannot awaken the life principle in the seed of a plant we cannot create a spiritual awakening in another person's life. You can sow God's word and provide a loving environment by living a godly life, but that is all.

Perhaps you sowed God word as a seed. But nothing happened. You don't know if that seed went to waste. Don't give up hope. The seed may take a long time to germinate in the heart that is cold and stony. But perhaps one day by the influence of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness and the Holy Spirit, the early and latter rain, that seed will sprout and be someone who receives eternal life. And some people will grow fast like a squash and others will be like peppers and give produce late.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike *will be good.*

Isaiah 32:20 Blessed *are* you who sow beside all waters, Who send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey.

Sow God's word everywhere because you don't know which will grow. Perhaps you said to yourself, "I won't share the gospel with that person because they will never accept it." Don't think like that. The word may be successful. What did the verse say that we read just a bit ago?

Isaiah 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

Psalms 126:6 He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves *with him.*

Why does the sower cry? Because the seed is food. But the sower throws the seed to the ground in hopes of a greater return. To sow God's word is not always easy. But when people receive eternal life, how we will rejoice!

David's atheist mother used to tell a story. There once was a man with a field. He removed the stones and the weeds and working hard he raised some good crops. A neighbor comes by and says, "The Lord certainly has provided you good fields!" The man replied, "You should have seen it when He was looking after it Himself!"

In the story, the man takes credit to himself for all the success of the field as if God did nothing. But because he was an unbeliever he did not understand this: Both in nature and in the spiritual realm, we have a work to do and the Lord Himself does what we cannot do. Just like the activity of the seed in the ground. For your spiritual growth, you have a work to do and the Lord will not do this for you. He gave that work to you.

Mark 4:29 "But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

When Christ's character is found among His people, He will return. We can hasten the Lord's coming.

2 Peter 3:11-12 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

You cannot grow in Christ by doing nothing. You cannot develop love, unselfishness and sacrifice which are foundational principles of God's kingdom by simply taking care of your own life. Are you living for yourself or are you living to give fruit to the Lord of the harvest? What are you doing for your spiritual development