

Sermon Title: **The Parable of the Sower**

Bible: Luke 8:4-15

Where & When: Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on September 22nd, 2019

Audience: about 33 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thankfully you called us as your disciples. Please open our ears to listen to the secrets of the kingdom of God. Please use us to sow the word of God. Please be with my lips in your grace and love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Four Soils in the Parable of the Sower

The Scripture that we read from the Gospel of Luke is "The Parable of the Sower." There are 4 kinds of soils in this parable; the path, rocky soil, thorny soil, and good soil. If you were farmworkers, in which soil would you choose to plant the seed? This is not difficult, right? Who wants to plant the seed on the path? The rocky soil? The thorny soil? The good soil?

2. The Parable of the Sower in Luke

"The Parable of the Sower" is not only in the Gospel of Luke. It is also in the Gospel of Matthew 13:1-23, and in the Gospel of Mark 4:1-20. Among the 4 Gospels, with the exception of the Gospel of John, three of them have "The Parable of the Sower."

When we look at these three Gospels closely, there are some differences. Three of the endings are different. In Matthew 13:23, it ends with “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.” In Mark 4:20, it ends with “these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and *accept* it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” I love the ending of Luke most. In Luke 8:15, it says “as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast **in an honest and good heart**, and bear fruit **with patient endurance**.”

3. In an Honest and Good Heart and With Patient Endurance

I love the words of “in an honest and good heart” and “with patient endurance.” I love the patient endurance, because sowing the seed is not the end, but the beginning of gardening. In Pat Freistas’ backyard, after planting the seeds, I need to water them, sometimes protect them from animals, especially from the birds, and take out the weeds. To bear fruit, continuous care and patience are needed. In other words, our time, energy, and sweat are needed.

An honest and good heart is also important. Seeds do not guarantee fruits. Some seeds sprout. Some seeds do not sprout. Only when the seeds are planted, do we know the results. When the seeds sprout, I want to be thankful for it. Even though I planted the seed, it is not all because of me. The seed itself contains the life. When the seeds do not sprout, I do not want to complain about it. I might be disappointed, but I will look into the reasons for what keeps the seed from

sprouting. Probably, I just need to try one more time. Or I just need to cultivate the soil: taking out rocks and taking out the weeds, or watering more or less. I will do what I can do. But I do not want to worry about what I cannot do. I want to be humble before nature, the creation of God.

4. 2020 Vision Team Meeting

Today, after worship, our lay leaders will have a meeting for our 2020 Vision. The church wants to set up some goals for 2020. As the seed has life, our church has life. And we want to find out our good soil, our strengths. Our lay leaders read one book, “Twelve Keys to an Effective Church - Strong, Healthy Congregations Living in the Grace of God” by Kennon L. Callahan. This book suggests that we focus on strengths, rather than weaknesses. We plan to expand one current strength, and add one new strength. There are 12 keys: 1. One Mission Outreach 2. Shepherding Visitation 3. Stirring Helpful Worship. 4. Significant Relational Groupings 5. Strong Leadership Team 6. Solid Decision Process 7. One Major Program 8. Open Accessibility 9. High Visibility 10. Land, Landscaping, and Parking 11. Adequate Space and Facilities 12. Generous Giving. Among 12 keys, there are priorities. For example, which church do you want to be like, the small church building that has a parking lot or the big church building that does not have a parking lot? According to this kind of priority, we decided to focus on the first four keys; one mission outreach, shepherding visitation, stirring helpful worship, and significant relational groupings. At the meeting, we plan to talk about our

strengths together and set up our goals for 2020. If you are interested in this meeting, please come and see. Everyone is welcome, whoever has the love and passion for this church and Gilroy.

5. Better Sowers

Which one is more important? To plant the seed? To bear fruit? Or to become a better planter? I really want to produce one hundredfold fruit. But, to me, to become a better sower is more important than to plant the seed and to bear the fruits. A better sower can plant the seed again and again! So, I hope for us to be better farmers. This needs both our prayer and our effort. Does God always answer my prayers? To me, not always. Then, I do not need to pray, right? If I do not pray, how can I know what God wants me to do? I need to pray to know God's vision. Even though I do not ask, God provides me what I need or what I want. Then, I do not need to pray, right? If I do not pray, I will think that I myself made it happen. I will be arrogant. I need to pray to be humble and thankful. On the other hand, because I pray for the fruits, is it okay not to water or not to take care of the weeds? Because I pray for the vision team, is it okay not to make a plan or not to have a meeting? If I am not ready, how can God give me the fruits? I might not know how to harvest the fruits, and the fruits would decay quickly. I believe that God wants us to pray and do our best for the church and the community. That's because we are good farmers already. And now God calls us to become better farmers. I answer to this calling, "Yes, Lord, I am here. Use me." And God is calling each of you. What is your answer?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you call us to this church and this community, Gilroy. We want to discover our gifts. We want to build up our strengths. We want to serve this community. Please do not stop pouring out your love and grace toward us. We are here, Lord. Please use us for your kingdom!

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Possible Qs.

1. Do you want to pray for the church and Gilroy?
2. What do you want to do for the church and Gilroy?