

THE PARABLE OF THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY

Week #1 of a 4-Week Series, "Parables of the Bible"

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So this lawyer was late for an appointment in his office and he decided to run through a stop sign. And, at the very same time, a farmer was driving his tractor through. And there was a tremendous crash. Fortunately, nobody was hurt, but the lawyer was ticked off and decided to go on the offense. And he got out of his car and he yelled, "You idiot! Why weren't you paying better attention! Now I'm going to miss my appointment!"

And he said, "You're going to regret this day, because I'm really going to make you pay."

And then the farmer kind of looks around, surveys things calmly. And he says, "Well, you know, I can see how upset you are, young fellow, but really, neither of us is hurt and there's just a little damage to our rides." And so he takes out of his pocket a flask, and he hands it to the lawyer.

And he says, "You know, why don't you just take a little sip of whiskey; it'll calm you down. It'll make you a little more grounded. It'll make you think that everything's going to be all right."

And so he agrees and he takes a long drink. And a couple minutes later he takes another slow, long drink. And he hands back the flask to the farmer. And the farmer caps it off and puts it back in his pocket. The lawyer says, "Well, aren't you going to have any?"

He said, "Ah, not yet. I'll just wait 'til after the police arrive." [Congregants laugh]

So today we're going to talk about farmers planting seeds. But this would be like a farmer planting evidence ... [Congregants laugh] But it'll be a little bit different!

How many people have either grown a garden or had your parents growing up and exposed you to gardening and growing gardens? You know, when I was a kid, my parents, it was one of their favorite activities together. When you've got 10 kids, you don't get many activities. And this was a big one. They loved growing their garden! They put so much love and care and time into it; it was incredible.

I remember when I would go with my mom to the grocery store; there would be these little packets of seeds. And you'd pick; you'd see carrots or zucchini or pumpkin, and they had all different kinds of seeds. And they had a little dirt lot in the back. And they would plant all the seeds and they would take care of it. And when it was time, the young ones -- us, you know -- we had to do the weeding. And we'd whine about weeding, because we really wanted water, which is way much easier.

And the interesting thing about seeds is: they create kind of a joyful expectation that something good is going to happen. Because you watch it: just the dirt it first, and then something sprouts up. And it keeps growing, and you get more excited until the harvest. Two or three months later, there were so much vegetables and stuff on our dining table; it was incredible. Fed the 10 of us, and we had extra for family and friends. We'd always give them a pumpkin or a zucchini or two when they left.

And so, from young, I was always amazed about seeds: how amazing they are. These tiny things, you know, producing so much! I mean, an absolute abundance! When you think about it, you know, seeds are really a creative energy. That they actually are able to generate and produce and multiply and increase.

Seeds have an intelligence in them already that knows how to help them grow into exactly what they came to be. I mean, seeds represent potential. Seeds represent possibilities. It represents the expansion of greater good in our lives.

It shouldn't really be that surprising that, in the Bible, seeds are used in 254 passages. Because they are powerful. There are an incredible symbol of the incredible possibilities that are available to all of us.

And so, some of the famous ones are the Parable of the Mustard Seed or the Parable of the Soil, when he sprinkles seed on different types of soil. The one we're going to look at today is the Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly.

It appears only in the book of Mark, Chapter 4, Verse 26 to 29. Here's how it reads:

"The kingdom of God is as if a farmer would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise day and night. And the seed would sprout and grow, and he does not know how. The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

Today we begin a four -week series on Jesus' parables. And Jesus taught in parables, because it was a really wise way to engage people in a story with common things ... like, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a candle"* ... *"The kingdom of heaven is like a wine skin"* ... *"The kingdom of heaven is like a lost sheep or a wedding robe."* Simple, everyday things. And he'd tell a story around those simple things to the point that they just got it for themselves. Instead of telling them, *"This is what you have to do"* or *"This is what you have to believe,"* he told it in a clever way where their understanding expanded so they could experience the kingdom of heaven in a greater way, right here and now.

So, here are the four lessons to help us experience the kingdom of heaven right here and now through the Parable of the Seed growing Secretly.

The first thing it teaches us is to **HAVE FAITH IN THE SEEDS OF POSSIBILITY**. You know, farmers plant seeds with faith and with an intention that they will grow. Because farmers know seeds have got the power in them to produce; you know, the power to create; the power multiply.

And, in many ways, we are the seeds of God. Within us, there is an intelligence that knows how to unfold and grow into all that we came to be. There are seeds of possibility and potential in all of us. Seeds to grow greater experiences of love and joy; to grow a greater experience of happiness and fulfillment; and living a more authentic life. Seeds to help us fulfill our divine purpose. I mean, there are seeds and potential in every single one of us.

You know, in Luke 17:21, it says, *"The kingdom of God is within you."* And there are harvests within all of us just awaiting us for the right conditions to plant these seeds of possibility for us to experience.

In the Book of Matthew, Chapter 21, Verse 22 it says, *"Whatever you ask in prayer, believing you shall receive ..."* And that's like saying, *"Whatever seeds you plant in your mind, believing that you will reap a harvest ..."* And see how it says, *"Whatever you ask?"* See how unlimited that is? There is no limit! Whatever it is you want to ask; whatever seed you want to plant!

And sometimes whatever could be a little overwhelming. Sometimes too many choices; there are too many options. How many people have ever been at a buffet and just couldn't decide what you wanted to eat? [Congregants laugh] There's just so much!

But it's an important thing for us to get clear. So I ask you: What seed of potential do you want to plant in your life for it to grow and have harvest? What seed of possibility is it that you want to sow? To experience that in your life?

You know, sometimes to get a little deeper into our clarity, we need to ask ourselves questions like: So what is my intent; what is the intention for my life? What is it that I could change that would help me show up in a greater way in my relationship? In the work that I do? In the way that I take care of myself?

I mean, what is it in us that is calling us? That is yearning? What is it: a dream or goal that you've had that you've never allowed yourself to pursue? And what permission have you not given yourself to try and experience and go after something?

I would say there are seeds of untapped possibility within each and every one of us. Regardless of what age; regardless of what stage; regardless of what you've achieved or accomplished, every one of us still has untapped seeds of possibility for us. There are harvests that await us, but we must have faith in the seed of possibility. And we must **PLANT IT WITH INTENTION.**

And there's reason for us to believe that there are greater possibilities for our lives. In the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 29, Verse 13 it says, *"For surely I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "plans to prosper you, not harm you; plans to give you hope and a future."* And it is saying there are still seeds within us for us to create; you know, for us to attract; for us to achieve; for us to become; and for us to experience.

Farmers know what seeds they want to plant and they know they're going to get it. And the question sometimes we need to ask ourselves: Do we know what kind of seeds we're planting? You know, sometimes we need to really be careful.

In the Book of Luke, Chapter 9, Verse 62, it says, *"Anyone who puts their hands to a plowshare and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of heaven."* Anyone who puts their hands to a plowshare and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of heaven!

And what's it saying. is back. then they would have to plow straight and look at the horizon and look straight so that the seeds would drop into the soil. But if you were doing that plowing, and you looked back, the plow would go off and seeds would get dropped on the pathway, rather than on the good soil. And what we would do is rob ourselves of the kind of harvest that we could have. That we need to plow straight for possibilities and not look back by keep replanting the pain of the past; regrowing feelings of unworthiness or lack or negativity.

And so the question is: What seeds do you want to plant? And so I want you to think of one seed you'd like to plant -- a seed of what would you like to plant -- that you know would bring greater fulfillment when there is a harvest and growth of it?

You know, so the first thing to do to experience the kingdom right here and now is to have faith in the seeds of possibility and to plant them with intention.

The second thing is about **TRUST.**

Now, I want you to think: What's the difference between faith and trust? Think about that for a second. Here's an example to tell you the difference. There was a guy that walked across Niagara Falls -- across the falls -- on a tightrope. And he gathered a little crowd, and he said, *"Come on, who believes that I can walk across this rope across Niagara Falls?"*

They said, *"Oh, we all have faith! We all have faith; you can do it! We all believe!"*

The guy walks across and he comes back. Takes 26 minutes. And then he said ... They all clap and he said, *"Well, how many people believe I can take this wheelbarrow and walk it along the rope and go all the way across and come back?"*

They said, *"Oh, we have faith! You can do it! We have faith!"*

And he does it! And then he comes back and says, *"How many people have faith that I could put somebody in it and push it across and come back?"* [Laughs]

And their hands are all up and they're like, *"Oh yes, we have faith!"*

And he said, "So who would like to go in the wheelbarrow?" All the hands went down. [Congregants laugh]

See, we have faith that a dream is possible, but we don't always trust that it'll happen. We don't always trust that we have what it is within ourselves to make it manifest and it be fulfilled.

You know, one of the key things that shows our level of trust is how much we worry in our lives. How many people have something that you have faith that it will happen for you? But you spend a lot of time worrying about how and when it's going to happen? Anybody? Okay, apparently no one except me and this gentleman ... No, I'm just ... [Congregants laugh]

I mean, the fact is: we all can sometimes get anxious when something isn't happening as quickly as we'd like. We can all get to a place of doubt: "Is this really going to ever happen? Can it ever happen?"

I love when it says the farmer goes to sleep and rises day and night, and it -- and the seed -- sprouts and grows and he has no idea how. You know, it is the seed growing secretly. Something happens in that ground that he doesn't know ... but you know what? He trusts that something's happening. He trusts that it will happen. He doesn't ... He can rest and not worry, because he doesn't feel he needs to know all the details. He just needs to trust his intention and that there will be a harvest.

When you think about it, there are all kinds of things that God does in our lives that we have no idea how it happens. Like, how does a broken heart heal? I don't know, but God makes it happen. How does forgiveness actually take place? I don't know, but God makes it happen. How do our ideas and intention or vision become reality? I don't know exactly, but I know that it happens. And I trust that it happens. For all of us to experience the kingdom of heaven, trust needs to be a vital part of our lives.

You know, in the Book of Proverbs, it says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding." Lean not to that part of you that feels like you need to know every detail! "But in all ways acknowledge God and He will make straight your paths."

And trust: trust is the thing. Farmers trust the earth. They trust the seed. They trust the universe. They trust the water. I mean, they trust nature. And this growth happens. You know, they absolutely trust that there is a process underway that they may not fully understand, but it is working in their favor.

"I trust God. I trust life. I trust all things are working together for my highest good!"

"I trust God!"

Together: [with congregants] *"I trust God!"*

"I trust life!"

[With congregants:] *"I trust life!"*

"I trust all things are working together for my highest good!"

Together: [with congregants] *"I trust that all things are working together for my highest good."*

It's working ... but we don't need to control it, and we don't need to know all the details. All we need to do is trust enough to just let it go and realize, "I don't need to know all of it."

You know, I really believe that we trust God, but also believe that we forget real fast. And we forget God real fast. We forget all the good that's happened to us in our lives. Let me give you an example. Remember when the children of Israel were freed from bondage in Egypt, and they went through the desert? And they were at the Red Sea, and then they saw that Pharaoh's men were coming. And then they started, "Oh my God! We're going to die! We're going to die!" You know, "We should have just stayed in Egypt; now we're going to die in this water!"

And then Moses said, "Stand firm and see the deliverance God will give today. For the Pharaoh's men that you see today, you will not see tomorrow."

And so what he's saying is that, when you're freaking out like that, trust and remember the good that God has done in our lives.

You remember when God would have people build altars where something great happened? It was to help them remember. Because sometimes, you know, even though God has brought us through so many things and manifested so much good in our lives, when there's one sign of trouble, we think it's never going to happen again. And so it's to remind ourselves.

So trust is something that has to be worked on and built on a regular basis. Because, as human beings, when things don't go well, we're going to forget. We're going to start awfulizing and think it's just hopeless and will never work out.

But a part of our practice is to keep practicing trust. And here are the three ways:

Number one: immerse your mind in the mind of God. The more we feel connected and one with God, guess what? The more fear falls away. The more anxiety falls away. The more worry and doubt and negativity falls away. Anything not of God, you know, kind of falls away when we center in Spirit.

The second one is one of the hardest spiritual practices. And that is to let go. You know, we've all heard, "Let go and let God." But sometimes we want to hold on and let God. [Laughs] You know, I mean, we're really human beings. We have a tendency to want to hold on.

But the thing to help us understand is: the more we let go, it means the more we free ourselves and open ourselves for God to move through us; for more of the light of God to flow; you know, for more wisdom and inspiration to flow in and through our lives. So it's important for us to practice letting go. To consciously let go.

And then the third one is: to hold a feeling of your intention. And what I mean by that ... Like, remember when it says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he"? It means as a man thinketh -- the thought -- in his heart -- the feeling -- so is he. The outcome and results. So instead of putting energy and worrying about the thing, why not put that energy in feeling what it would feel like to have that thing right now?

So go back to the thing I asked you to think about: the seed you'd like to plant. And I want you to think about what would it feel to have that harvest right now? What level of joy or gratitude or thankfulness or happiness would you be experiencing? Because when you take the thought and add the feeling, it cancels out worry, but it also creates a magnetic energy to attract and manifest the good that you desire.

And so the step is to trust ... and trust enough that you are willing to let go and realize you don't need to know all the details.

And then, the next one is kind of related, but it's the importance of **BEING PATIENT THROUGH THE PROCESS**. Patient through the process.

How many people here have ever been impatient? Anybody impatient? [Congregants laugh] Life wasn't happening as quick as you wanted it to? And sometimes, you know, what we end up doing is we're trying to force things to happen; or rush things to happen; or will or make things happen.

You know, I've mentioned before, somebody gave me for Christmas a kitchen towel and it says, "Come on, inner peace, I don't have all day!" [Congregants laugh] And I think we can all relate to that!

And so, in the passage, it says, "The earth produces of itself first the stock, then the head, then the full stock in the head." And so, it's saying that life takes time for things to happen. There's growth; there are things that are unfolding. Things do not just happen instantly. And so, it's an important thing.

Like, you know when a little baby chick is hatching out of an egg? It is that little -- you know, they've got to keep pecking and pecking and pecking. And it is all that pecking that actually prepares them to be strong and to come out of the shell. If we would actually try and help the baby chick, it would actually kill them, and they would not develop as strong and would not survive.

There is a process working for us that takes time, because it's preparing us. And the same way that baby chicks have to break out of that, whatever struggle we're going through is preparing us; is strengthening us; and is bringing us to the level. So that when the thing manifests, we will be at the highest level to be able to enjoy it in a fulfilling way.

Sometimes we think we're ready for everything now, and the truth is we're not, if we're really honest with ourselves. Sometimes our consciousness, our life, our awareness is not fully aware. And so, we need to be patient, understanding there's a process of preparation spiritually that is going on within us that we should not avoid. That we should willingly -- patiently -- move through it.

You know, patience is not something that's strong, but it's a vital and important thing. Similarly, how many people are not really good at waiting? Anybody not? It's kind of like, you know, impatience's cousin.

And so here's what it says in the Scripture. In the Book of Isaiah it says, *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint."*

And so, an important spiritual practice is patience. Is a willingness to wait, understanding and knowing there's a process going on that is there to help us and prepare us to attract that greater good in our life.

And the last one is to **ENJOY THE HARVEST NOW**. It says that when the grain is ripe, at once, with his sickle, he cuts because the harvest has come. And one of the things that's important for us to remember is to celebrate the harvest in our lives: to celebrate the good; to celebrate the joys; to celebrate the successes.

Sometimes life gets so busy, and we're working so hard -- go, go, go, trying to achieve this, trying to achieve that -- sometimes we don't pause to truly celebrate and really drink in. Not only do we sometimes forget how much good God has done for us, sometimes we forget to acknowledge that good and celebrate it and actually appreciate it.

You know, Jesus said something really beautifully. He said, *"You say, 'Three months or four months until the harvest?' I say, 'Lift up your eyes. See that the fields are already ripe for harvest.'"*

And what he is saying is: don't wait for that big thing to happen for you to celebrate. Celebrate all the many little things that happen in our lives. Be present to what's going on now and not just waiting until that thing happens sometimes in the future. You know, enjoy life now! Celebrate life now! Stop and appreciate the good that is all around us.

So I had this really horrible flu on 4th of July. And so, I wanted to go see fireworks and stuff. Instead, I'm in bed feeling horrible. So I'm thinking to myself, "Enjoy the harvest now." [Laughs] But I was able to do it. And first, it was really cool to get some extra sleep. I really appreciated that. I celebrated that. I also celebrated the fact that I didn't have COVID; it was negative. So that made me feel good.

Another one is: a friend was driving and texted me and said, *"I'm in your neighborhood. Do you want me to pick up some of that soup you like? The spicy miso soup you love?"* And did that for me. And I love hot soup, and especially when I'm not feeling good. So I really enjoyed that.

I got to watch ... Anybody watch the Euro Cup? The soccer? Okay, me and that lady over there ... [Congregants laugh] Well, anyway, I watched a couple of games. Now, my family, we all always have a pool -- a competition to who picked the winners. And so, that was fun -- to banter back and forth.

Yesterday was a dear friend of mine's birthday, and we texted each other of how much we love each other and how blessed we are. It's been like 25 years. It is absolutely incredible. And it's cool; even not feeling good, I felt loved. You know, I felt happy. I felt good to be in my house.

And so, you know, every one of us has harvest going on all the time if we're willing to look. As Jesus said, *"Lift up your eyes."* Sometimes we're so busy -- focused on that thing we want -- we miss some of the beauty and the simple little things, you know, that make our lives so wonderful and so good.

So, there was this young, ambitious salesman trying to sell a farmer a bicycle to be more efficient driving around, riding around the farm and in town. And so, he's doing his pitch. And then the farmer thinks. He said, *"Well, you know, you make a lot of good points, but you know, I think I'd rather save my money for a cow."*

And the ambitious young salesman says, *"Well, you know, think about it. You know foolish that's going to look? You riding around on a cow in town?"* [Congregants laugh]

And the farmer said, *"Well, not half as foolish as I'd look trying to milk a bicycle."* [Laughs with congregants]

Alright. The only thing more foolish than that bad joke is when we don't give ourselves permission to enjoy our lives fully. When we keep postponing or delaying, and are waiting for something incredible to happen. Something incredible is happening every day and all the time! And we need to give ourselves permission to enjoy the harvest now.

Seeds are amazing! They have so much potential in them! And it is amazing how they can bring such great harvest. And that potential of God and possibilities is in each and every one of us. And so, the few things we need to do are: to plant in faith and plant with intention, knowing the seed that we want to plant. Trust that God loves us. God has a plan for us, and we just don't need to know all the details. And we can just let go and trust. And then, third, is to be patient with the process; it's really helping us unfold. Like that little chick, you know, it's a part of the process to prepare us so we can have a breakthrough, so greater things could happen. And, finally, enjoy the harvest now. Don't keep waiting; just look around and notice how blessed we are.

And those are the lessons to help us experience a kingdom of heaven from the Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly. God bless you all!