

Mission Reflection

for the Season of Pentecost

Seafarers International House



Scripture

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the 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. Let anyone with ears listen!”

“Hear then the parable of the sower. 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 the world 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.”¹

Message

Frankly, it’s not easy being the good soil. On any given day, our lives are found on paths, around rocks or amid thorns.

Salvation and the heavenly kingdom don’t pop up as clear traffic signals in the highways of our lives. There is an element of mystery in Faith. The issue is whether and to what we extent we ponder and try to understand what the Gospel is telling us. All too often, we hear the Gospel and are untroubled by mystery and move on to other concerns. We are content to live under a theological rock.

We also have our moments of impetuosity. We hear the Good News in a moment of inspiration and promptly re-broadcast it. But it is only a moment of inspiration, possibly a little shallow and readily blown away and forgotten.

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Harbor of Hospitality

And sometimes, we just reside with thorny people, ourselves included. We are absorbed with our happiness, our success and our reputations and legacy. Our latent narcissism chokes out any abiding concern for God and neighbor.

It's just not easy being good soil. But then, maybe that's not what God intended for us. In our Pentecostal reflections, consider the possibility that (i) the Holy Spirit does not come to solve our problems but to create them and (ii) the Holy Spirit doesn't prevent failure but invites it.² Maybe we're called to be on the paths, around the rocks and amid the thorns, and persist daily in faith and service. There is, after all, ample opportunity today for Lutherans to encounter and combat dishonesty, divisiveness, disenfranchisement and damage.

Prayer

Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word, where love can grow and peace is understood. But let my mind and my hands actively seek out the paths, rocks and thorns where You call me to pray and to love and to serve.

1. Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

2 David Lose, "Pentecost Paradoxes", WORKING PREACHER, June 5, 2011

Postscript: As we approach summer, it's helpful to remember that there are few vacations or holidays for seafarers and asylum seekers to enjoy. That's not to suggest that we give up our summer plans. It may be sufficient to (i) set aside a little time during the upcoming vacations and holidays for a brief prayer for their welfare, (ii) spend a little time on the beach or the pond knitting a few hats and or scarves for them and (iii) dash off a quick email message to your Senators (www.senate.gov) and your representatives (www.house.gov) with your views and suggestions on pending legislation, regulations, and executive orders of concern to you. Seafarers International House embraces all children of God, be them Christian, Muslim, Hindi, Buddhist or other faith expressions. Wherever, whenever and however they may be in need, we are called to join as a community of faith to pray, advocate and take steps to address their needs. Thank you for being the hands that do God's work.

Seafarers International House is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants. We offer pastoral care, hospitality, social assistance, advocacy and prayer in the ports in Baltimore, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia, and in an 84-room Guesthouse in Manhattan. The Guesthouse accommodates more than seafarers and immigrants. It's available for church gatherings, civic groups and individuals in need of safe, affordable lodging. Our Guesthouse helps them accomplish their mission goals, and their patronage helps us accomplish ours. "Sleep Well By Doing Good."

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