

July 16 2017

**Reading from the Bible** Psalm 65:9-13

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

**Sermon** *How Does Your Garden Grow?*

How many of you like to garden? How many of you don't like to garden too much? There are all kinds of gardens, flower gardens, vegetable gardens, and if you go to Manito Park, there is a rose garden, a Japanese garden, a formal garden, that is called Duncan gardens, with a fountain that is used quite often for weddings because it is so beautiful. The picture I have in front of me is a picture of Duncan gardens that my brother took. Now, I like gardens, especially flower gardens, so I admire the time and work and the thought that goes to make this garden so beautiful. I have flower gardens, but they are of the easy to maintain variety, mostly perennials, flowers that come back year after year. Unfortunately also, many years they suffer from benign neglect and have weeds in them. A few years ago, George transformed an overgrown rock garden into a terraced vegetable garden. It is just big enough to give us fresh vegetables through the summer. The exposure is to the south and it is right next to the house so the plants grow well and weeding is minimal, that works for me. When we first moved onto the property we thought we would have a vegetable garden. So we tilled some ground not far from the house towards the road. Soon we had carrots, beets, and beans coming up. What we didn't think about was that deer love to eat fresh vegetables and if they don't want to eat them they just pull them out of the ground and leave them. Needless to say, we were sad and frustrated. We decided though that we didn't want to build a big fence to keep the deer out, and gave up on having a garden.

So why all this talk of gardens? Please listen to the passage from Matthew 13 in which Jesus tells the followers a parable about the sower.

Matthew 13: 1-9

“That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>Let anyone with ears<sup>\*</sup> listen!’

### Matthew 13:18-23

‘Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup>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.\* <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>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.’

The passage talks about the sower and how some of his seeds fall on the path, to be quickly eaten by the birds or in my case, the deer. Then there are the seeds that fall on the rocks. They grow quickly but have no root system to sustain them so soon they die. Every year, I have volunteer petunias under where my petunia pots hang. It is a rock bed. They grow and sometimes they bloom but they never get very big, there isn't enough there to sustain them. Then there are the seeds that fall into the thorny patch, the thorns grow better than the seeds and choke them out. This is a lot like parts of my flower beds; the weeds are bigger than the flowers.

Then the sower hits pay dirt, sorry I couldn't resist, and plants his seeds in good soil and his seeds produce grain many times more than the seeds that were planted. This is more like my vegetable garden. We have good soil, there is the opportunity for lots of sun, and there is no shortage of water. So our vegetables grow well and we are able to enjoy fresh carrots, peas, beans, and more.

Jesus goes on to relate the different types of seed and where they are sown to our lives as Christians.

The seeds on the path are like people who don't really understand the word of God or take the time to listen and learn.

The seeds in the rocks are like people who embrace the word of God but have no substance to keep their faith growing. They are easily distracted and soon what faith they had is gone, withered away.

The seeds in the thorns are like the people who have faith but are smitten by the ways of the world and the tease of all things material. Soon the faith that they had has withered away, not unlike the seeds in the rocks.

Then there are the seeds that are grown in good soil, they grow and grow bringing back many times more than what was planted. They are like faithful Christians, they hear the word and they understand it. Their faith continues to be strong and continues to grow as they learn more and embrace the Word of God and the love that Jesus has for them.

Do you think though that the seeds that were grown in good soil just grew? Being a good Christian is like the seeds in the good soil, there is the base of the good soil but it takes work and care to maintain the seeds to ensure they continue to grow. They need water, they need sun, they need weeding, and thinning. It takes work, a labor of love. Without our care the seeds wouldn't be able to grow to their full potential providing the grain or the vegetables that the sower needs. Being a good Christian is very much the same, we have to have faith, we need to believe, and we need to pray. We need to do these things on a daily basis to ensure that we continue to be the good Christians that God would want us to be, the seeds planted in the good soil. If we slack off, we will be more like the seeds that were grown in the rocks or the thorny patch. We have the faith and belief to start with but we aren't doing what needs to be done to maintain it. So our life as Christians can start to wither away.

We need to remember the good news that if we start to wither, we can get back to being the seeds in the good soil. Start with prayer and go from there. God is always there for us no matter what kind of soil our seeds were planted in. We just need to reach out to Him.

Where do your seeds land, the path, the rocks, the thorny patch, or the good soil? God loves us all and with His help we can all be the seeds in the good soil.  
AMEM