

SEEDS WITH WINGS

Text: Luke 8:4-8

LHUMC 11/3/13

All Saints

Practicing Extravagant Generosity/Stewardship #1

I. Introduction

- A. If you are reading the devotional book, when you got to Wednesday this week and it referred to the story of the farmer and the seeds, you might have realized like I did that it takes us in a different direction than you may have gone before with this story.
1. Typically, we approach the story of the farmer and his seeds from the perspective of being the soil.
 2. And so from my earliest Sunday School days, I've tried hard to be good soil, to not let those rocks or those thornbushes or those birds get in the way of my growing in faith.
 3. But when you begin to tell this story in terms of generosity and then you also tell it on All Saints Sunday, it can't help but become a story more about the farmer, or even more than that about the quality of seeds that the farmer sows.
 4. That approach has gotten me thinking about my Grandpa who owned a seed corn company when I was a kid. He knew the importance of quality seeds, and would wax eloquently about what it took to produce the best seeds money could buy. And I still remember at harvest time, watching the women that he hired who were sitting alongside the big conveyor belt as the ears of corn came off the trucks—inspecting every single ear to make sure it was of the highest quality.
- B. I also admit that this whole image of the seeds with wings that the book gives us has stretched me a little bit this week.
1. The reason for that is because I've always had a love-hate relationship with those little things (actually more of a hate-hate relationship)
 2. That's because at our house, in the spring at least, seeds with wings are everywhere, and everywhere is an understatement.
 3. I spend about two to three weeks sweeping them, vacuuming them, raking them, sucking them up with the lawn mower, cleaning them out of the gutters, usually sneezing the whole time because my tree allergies are always the worst right then.

4. And so I admit, up to this point in my life, I have had nightmares about seeds with wings!
5. So it has taken a fairly major attitude adjustment on my part to see those little seeds with wings as good things. But the good news is that maybe I'll see them differently next spring.
6. Do you want a little science lesson this morning? Watch this little youtube video about seeds with wings.

II. We show you that partly for scientific reasons, but as I watched that, I realized there were some theological realities we might gain from it too. Here's what I'm thinking:

A. The book talks about generosity as being for us like the practice of spreading seeds with wings—in other words, when we are generous, our gifts are like those kinds of seeds—they spread out well beyond where we are, beyond where we can see, beyond our immediate sphere of influence.

1. And that is certainly true as United Methodists when we are generous in our gifts to the church.
2. As part of a uniquely connectional denomination, we have seen and heard time and time again how our generosity in very real ways makes it possible to spread seeds of love and compassion all around the world.
3. Those seeds most often take the form of what we call ministry shares, but also in all of the special offerings and noisy offerings that we take for causes out somewhere in the world.

B. I also find it really interesting in the video where it talks about how the maple seeds have to be mature before they can really take flight out into the world.

1. If they are too green when they cut loose from the tree, they drop straight down, defeating the whole purpose of having wings.
2. But if they fall at that point of maturity, when they are “ready to germinate”, then they become these perfect little winged helicopters that soar with the wind.
3. And when the video talks about how those little wings are engineered better than any man-made flying machine, it goes to show once more the awesomeness of our Creator God.

C. I think the same is true with us as seed sowers—it takes a certain amount of maturity on our part to spread seeds with wings, for a number of reasons.

1. Beginning with the fact that when we spread seeds with wings, we may never see first-hand where those eventually take root and

grow. When we are generous beyond our own sphere of geographical reference, that takes some maturity because we won't always see the results of that generosity first-hand.

2. We also have to trust the Holy Spirit to do its thing in all of this.
 - a) Without the wind to blow them, the seeds with wings that we see in nature lose their purpose.
 - b) So it is with the seeds that we spread—the Holy Spirit, which the Bible more than once describes as “being like the wind” has the power to take those seed-like gifts that we share, whatever they are, material or spiritual, and spread them into the world.
 - c) We just have to be willing to let go of them—which also takes some maturity, especially for us who like to be in control of things, including our seeds!
3. And then we also have to understand that like Jesus' story and the video, some of the seeds we spread may not take for whatever reason.
 - a) And so it takes a certain amount of maturity sometimes to let those situations go and give glory to God for the circumstances in which God's power **has** grown something or someone in a new way from the seeds that we planted.

III. And then I've also been realizing how appropriate this image of seeds with wings is for All Saints Sunday.

- A. At the end of the devotion, the author asks these questions: “Think of two or three of the most influential people in forming your own soul and character other than your relatives? What can you learn from their generosity and the legacy they have left for others?”
- B. Those are “seeds with wings” kind of questions. Those are also questions that get us thinking about who the “saints” have been in our lives.
- C. Because by definition, a saint is one who spreads seeds with wings. A saint is one who touches those even beyond the ground immediately around them.
 1. We see that in the book of Hebrews, where in chapter 11, the writer gives a long list of saints from the Old Testament who planted the seeds of faith.
 2. The list is long, and contains some names that we would expect to be there—Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Noah.
 3. But there are some others there that might be a little surprising—Gideon (a man who had serious doubts at first about his call from

God) Rahab (a woman of ill-repute who had the faith to help in the conquering of Jericho),

4. Which goes to show that God has put the possibility of sainthood in all of us; that whatever has happened in our lives up to this point does not disqualify us from being sowers of seeds with wings.
 5. And after the list, the writer says in chapter 12 that we are to continue the journey of faith—to not just be content to accept the seeds that have been passed on to us and grow in our own faith, but to “come to full germination” to use the scientific term, and spread our own seeds of faith.
- D. And now as we prepare to read the names of those who have gone on to the church triumphant in the last year, those who were and are the saints for us, we recognize not just the seeds that they planted in us, but the seeds they planted in their communities, and in those people and places that we may not even be aware of.
- E. We celebrate that they, in their own ways, understood what generosity really is, as we remember the gifts that they shared with us and with others.
- F. And most of all, we celebrate the seeds that because of them and their generosity, are now germinating within us,
- G. We celebrate that we now have the opportunity to allow the wind of the Holy Spirit to take them and spread them and make them grow in places we haven't even imagined.
- H. I'm wondering if this image might not be a part of what God's gift of eternal life really is.
1. You might call it the earthly component of that gift, this passing of the seeds of faith and generosity from saint to saint to saint.
 2. Because when you think about it like that, you realize that these saints will continue to live on, not just in us, but in those still to come.
- I. And so now please join me in prayer as we celebrate both the seeds and these saints who had the faith to share them with us and with the world.