

November 12, 2023
God's Good News Story
A Story About Seeds

In our year long series ‘*God’s Good News Story*’ we have traced the work of God to bring mankind into a right relationship with Him. It has been a story of God’s **‘Scarlet Thread of Redemption’** where He has persistently and graciously sought to ‘seek and save the lost’.

The last two weeks we looked at the Crucifixion, Burial, Resurrection, and the Ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. We come to an end to the earthly ministry of Christ and in January we will begin a new phases of God’s Good News Story with the focus on the Church – Alive & Growing.

Today I want to bridge the gap between these with a focus on Seeds. What? Seeds? You may be thinking what in the world does that have to do with bridging the gap between Christ’s earthly ministry and the Church Age Ministry? Well, just hold on and let me show you.

Jesus’ love for parables and stories are very evident. He used seeds as a focus in some of these stories, and actually, seeds give us a picture of the work of Christ as He died and then was resurrected to bring forth life, and life abundantly.

Let’s read a passage from John 12 that sets the stage for this message....

John 12:23-26...²⁰ *Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast;* ²¹ *these people then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and were making a request of him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”* ²² *Philip came and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus.* ²³ *But Jesus answered them by saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* ²⁴ *Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.* ²⁵ *The one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life.* ²⁶ *If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

These verses transpire during Passion or Holy Week. I estimate around Wednesday of that week. These Greek gentiles were believers in the true God and had made a decision to seek our Jesus to know more about Him. We don’t know what all they talked with Jesus about, but something they discussed caused Jesus to use the metaphor of a seed and the need for it to die to itself in order to produce even greater things.

They may have questioned why Jesus had to suffer and die much as the Disciples had issues and concerns with as well. They may have, like the Disciples, been under the conclusion that the Messiah would not die but rule and reign. That is true that the Messiah will one day rule and reign for all eternity, but it was not at the time of His first coming. His destiny and purpose were to bring about redemption and salvation for all people, but the difficult thing was that it required the death of Jesus to bring new life and hope to all.

We all have a tendency to take the easiest route possible and to avoid the difficult. It is part of our human nature. However, it takes sacrifice in order to achieve great things and we often balk at that fact. Jesus is reiterating the fact that we must die to self and our old life in order to take up the new life in Christ.

Following is a story recounted by Charles Stanley in his InTouch Ministries Devotional.

"There were two kernels of wheat lying on the floor of a cozy barn. One day the farmer came in and told them, "I want to take you out of the barn and plant you in the earth. I'm going to put you in the ground and cover you with soil. It'll be dark, and you'll die. But I promise that you will multiply and become fruitful." The first kernel of wheat said, "No way!

Count me out. I like my comfort, and I don't want to die." But the second one, after careful consideration, decided the promise of a future harvest was worth the sacrifice. So, the farmer took him outside and planted him but left the first kernel of wheat in the barn. A few days later, a small green sprout appeared where the seed had been planted. It grew and became a stalk of wheat that produced a hundred more kernels. For the next 40 years, the farmer planted all the seeds that had originated from that first one, and year after year the harvest multiplied. However, the kernel that stayed in the barn remained there by itself, never multiplying. Which kernel of wheat are you? Are you playing it safe, or have you let Christ plant you in the world? The best way to influence God's kingdom is to let go of your own desires, get out of your comfort zone, and serve the Lord by serving others." (From Charles Stanley. <https://www.intouch.org/read/daily-devotions/sunday-check-in-with-dr-stanley-a-tale-of-two-seeds>)

Let's also remember the parable of the seeds that Jesus told in Matthew 13. Some seeds were planted or sowed on the surface of the soil, and they never grew and were taken by birds, others planted in rocky soil and never grew because they did not have deep roots, others were planted in good deep soil and they multiplied and grew. Once we decide to follow Christ we must be fruitful and grow.

There are several passages that teach this concept. Let me share a few...

Mark 8:35... For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

Galatians 2:20... I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Luke 9:23... And Jesus said to them, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

This principle of death to bring life seems to us as humans, to be counterintuitive. It just doesn't seem to make human, practical sense. Of course, the obvious reason is that it is not a human principle, but a God principle. We can only see things through our limited earthly view, but God is infinite and all-knowing.

Warren Wiersbe (The Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol. 1) gives this summary and explanation of the concept. "Jesus used the image of a seed to illustrate the great spiritual truth that there can be no glory without suffering, no fruitful life without death, no victory without surrender. A seed is weak and useless unless it is

planted and 'dies' to its former self, then it can become fruitful. If a seed could talk it would no doubt complain about being put in the cold dark earth, but it is the only means to a new and fruitful life. (A similar concept is to be found in the caterpillar to a butterfly transformation). We, as humans, are like seeds in that may feel small and insignificant. But when we die to our human self dependance and allow God to transform us into a new creation, then God can do great and mighty things through us.

It takes courage and faith to surrender our current self-reliance, which we have become comfortable with and may see as the only way to live; and to allow God to remold and remake us into a new creation.

We must allow God to plant us in His soil and die to self and be raised to new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

What about you? Are you willing to die to self and to let Christ have First Priority in your life, and to be willing to follow Him anywhere and to obey Him completely in every area of your life?