



Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

June 27, 2021

“Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” Then he said, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand...²⁰ And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

Mark 4:8-9; 20 (NLT)

*Call to Worship

Lord, dare we believe that we can become good soil?

It seems as if there is so much arrayed against us!

Underlying rock makes deep roots difficult.

Thorny distractions choke out the seed of Your Word from growing.

Sometimes, we even find our souls resistant and hardened towards You.

Have mercy on us, Lord. Meet us in this place of heartfelt worship.

May Your Holy Spirit assure us we can become good soil!

*Praise

“O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”
(verses 1-5)

UMH 57

*Opening Prayer

*Lord, You are the Sower and the Lord of the Harvest! We are humbled that you seek to sow seeds of Your grace into the soil of our lives. Through Your Holy Spirit, You oversee the entire process from sowing to germination to growing to fruit-bearing. We are amazed to discover our lives—prone to shallowness and distractions even hard resistance—can become good soil! Bear fruit for Your Kingdom through us, we humbly but joyfully pray. **Amen.***

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of praise and gratitude!

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

A Prayer for Good Soil

Lord, we confess that we are influenced and molded by all the pressures and problems we encounter in daily life. We feel the pull to shallow living when we just cannot seem to get our roots down into the soil of your grace. We experience the choking pressure of distractions internal and external that suffocate our souls. And yes, we confess, sometimes our hearts seem hardened and resistant to Your presence. Have mercy on us. Forgive and cleanse us.

Open our eyes and ears to the presence of Your Holy Spirit. May the seeds of Your Word scattered among us this morning fall on fertile soil. May they take root in our hearts and lives, and produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our teacher and our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

God's Word

Mark 4:8-9; 20 (NLT)

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Message

"You Can Become Good Soil!"

Pastor Clark

See Message Below

*Hymn of Faith

"Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"

UMH 462

Blessing

Inspired by Jeremiah 17:7-8

*Blessed are those who trust in the Lord
and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.
They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they go right on producing delicious fruit.*



Be reminded that next week, we return to worship at Hope UMC. Same time each Sunday...10:00 AM. Please join us and invite a friend to attend with you.

O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing

- 1. O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!*
- 2. My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of thy name.*
- 3. Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.*
- 4. He breaks the power of canceled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean;
his blood availed for me.*
- 5. He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.*

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

- 1 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
and to take him at his word;
just to rest upon his promise,
and to know, "Thus saith the Lord."*

Refrain:

*Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him!
How I've proved him o'er and o'er!
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
O for grace to trust him more!*

2 O how sweet to trust in Jesus,
just to trust his cleansing blood;
and in simple faith to plunge me
neath the healing, cleansing flood! [Refrain]

3 Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
just from sin and self to cease;
just from Jesus simply taking
life and rest, and joy and peace. [Refrain]

I'm so glad I learned to trust thee,
precious Jesus, Savior, friend;
and I know that thou art with me,
wilt be with me to the end. [Refrain]

Prayer List for June 27

- Guy Cory, now in rehab at Violet Springs
- The Family of Dean Vaugh, after his passing last Sunday
- Mary Evans, now in memory care at Winchester Trails
- Jan Smith from Faith Church beginning treatments
- Christina Cuddihy, director of Educare, treatments on hold for a short time
- Jan Yaple, is doing much better! Her numbers are good, no dialysis needed!
- Rita, the mother of Terry Austin, who was hospitalized for an infection
- Sarah Cory, will be moving to Bickford Senior Living in Bexley (2600 E. Main St. Columbus, OH 43209)
- Gary Stammler, pancreatic cancer, following surgery
- Summer **Chosen** TV Episode Ministry
- Community Focus: Children and families who deal with food insecurities
- National Focus: tragic building collapse in Surfside, Fla
- World Focus: Worldwide distribution of the coronavirus vaccines: Haiti

You Can Become Good Soil!

Mark 4:8, 20 (NLT)

Introduction

“And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

My guess is that all of us feel just a bit intimidated by that passage. We may not feel we are capable of such fruitfulness.

Nineteenth century novelist George Macdonald, whose writings first turned C.S. Lewis toward God, sometimes thought of the soil of his own soul as hopeless.

*“My soul is a poor land, plenteous in dearth—
Here a blade of grass, there a small herb for food—
A nothing that would be something if it could.”*

We understand such a mood, don’t we? My soil is often it seems, *“a nothing that would be something if it could.”*

The Lord of the Soil holds out hope for your soil and mine. We are capable, Jesus said, of bringing forth a harvest thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold of what was sown. I love how author Ellsworth Kalas, a UM pastor turned seminary professor and president, captured the entire parable:

“The soil that is so resistant that birds carry away the seed before it takes root, or so shallow that a sprout springs up and dies within a day, or so encumbered with itself that its weeds choke out the seed of the Kingdom, is also the soil that can bring forth abundantly. I believe, Kalas says, there are seasons in the soil of the soul.”

I would suggest, to add to Dr. Kalas’ comments, that the best seasons are ahead of us! I believe you can become good soil! Everyone of us! No exceptions! Why do I have such confidence? Our souls, like a seed, when given the right conditions, will germinate, grow, and produce a yield. God’s Word will germinate in our hearts and produce a harvest!

I believe this verse is not only a description of what good soil looks like, but even more a way for all the other soils to be transformed into good soil. Writer and journalist Joseph Bayly wrote about this in his little book ***Psalms of My Life*** with a piece entitled ***Psalm of a Gardener...***

*Lord of the compost heap
you take garbage
and turn it into*

*soil good soil
for seeds to root
and grow
with wildest increase
flowers to bloom
with brilliant beauty.
Take all the garbage
of my life
Lord of the compost heap
turn it into
soil good soil
and then plant seeds
to bring forth
fruit and beauty
in profusion.*

So how does the garbage of our lives get transformed into good soil?

#1 Hear the Word

In his book ***Character Forged from Conflict***, Gary Preston writes:

Back when the telegraph was the fastest means of long-distance communication, there was a story, perhaps apocryphal, about a young man who applied for a job as a Morse code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, noisy office. In the background a telegraph clacked away. A sign on the receptionist's counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office.

The young man completed his form and sat down with seven other waiting applicants. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. Naturally the other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. Why had this man been so bold? They muttered among themselves that they hadn't heard any summons yet. They took more than a little satisfaction in assuming the young man who went into the office would be reprimanded for his presumption and summarily disqualified for the job.

Within a few minutes the young man emerged from the inner office escorted by the interviewer, who announced to the other applicants, "Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man."

The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and then one spoke up saying, "Wait a minute--I don't understand something. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair."

The employer responded, "I'm sorry, but all the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out the following message in Morse code: 'If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.' None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did. So the job is his."

God uses many means to demonstrate his care--not only through his Word, his Spirit, and the ministry of Christian friends, but also through more unconventional methods--like burning bushes, talking donkeys, hungry creatures of the sea, visiting angels, or a bright star in the darkened sky. We need only to be alert to these signs.

Such hearing takes a certain amount of attentiveness. How attentive are you? Here are a few ways you can heighten the attentiveness of your soul making it more likely to hear God's voice speaking to you: Being fully present in the moment as opposed to living ahead of yourself...waiting with expectancy... being wakeful and thus aware of what is happening all around you...being available to God instead of being so preoccupied.

#2 Embrace the Word

Most translations use the word "understanding" here. It tends to lead some people today to come to the conclusion that Jesus had in mind merely giving our mental assent to his teaching. That is not what the word Jesus chose means. It means, rather, that the person so completely embraces God's Word that it begins to shape their souls!

Here are some indicators you have embraced God's Word:

- ❖ You have a growing, ever-expanding awe about who God is...his majesty, his power, his love
- ❖ Your worship will become infused with a new reverence as a result
- ❖ You will find your faith growing little by little as you discover God to be trustworthy
- ❖ You will be more willing to step out in faith with a growing confidence that you are held in God's hands
- ❖ You find yourself more inclined to pray not out of obligation or ritual but out of a heart's desire to be in God's presence
- ❖ You will find a greater urgency to extend love to others in word and deed not because you feel you should but because you long for them to experience what you have
- ❖ You find that the things you once struggled with as temptations are slowly beginning to lose their hold over your life

How deeply are you embracing God's Word?

#3 Seasons of Receptivity

Are there times when we more likely to be receptive to the seed of God's Word? Are there seasons in the soil of our soul that are particularly open to productivity?

One such season is when we experience the birth of our children...

Perhaps one of these seasons when we are most receptive and open come when we encounter times of personal crisis: grief over the loss of a loved one, severe illness, the breaking up of a marriage, a time of personal defeat. These may provide the soil in which the soul becomes especially and richly sensitive.

Keith Mannes and his wife have an aunt (actually his wife's aunt) Gladys who has always had a little apple orchard at her home. But one year when they paid her a visit, Keith couldn't help but notice the huge harvest of apples. The branches hung heavy, and some were cracking with the weight of abundance. Never, in many years, had anyone seen such a harvest.

When Keith asked Aunt Gladys why, she told him that last year there was a late frost in the spring, and all the buds froze. When that happens, Gladys said, an apple tree does a miraculous thing: It stores up its energy in thousands of small bumps, or nodules, called *scions* (pronounced "see-ons"). All that energy pulsates through that network of scions until the spring of the following year, and then, BAM! You have an exploding riot of buds, as an apple tree unleashes all that stored up energy.

Gladys' description made me think about our spiritual lives. Sometimes the harsh frosts of this life—cancer, divorce, bankruptcy, trauma, grief, depression—cause our hearts to freeze. But at the core of the Christian faith, we also live with an incredible promise: in and through Christ, there will be an abundant harvest in our lives. God's power is pulsating under the gnarly bark of this world and even our bodies. In Christ, we are being formed into a small nodule of living hope. During certain seasons of our lives we feel our hearts waiting, longing, and even aching for those frozen places to burst into life. Our living hope is that one day, all of this stored up glory will be unleashed in a joyful riot of splendor.

While our younger years are most likely some of the most spiritually receptive times in our lives, we are discovering more and more, that life's later years can produce good soul soil. We find circumstances cause the idealistic dreams of our younger years to be tempered with reality. We learn from our struggles and setbacks. We build upon what we have discerned throughout life and all its ups and downs. And we face the sobering reality that we are running out of years, out of opportunities for spiritual receptivity. It stirs a genuine sense of urgency in our souls.

This is especially true if these persons had real openness to God in earlier years. Life unfolds in such a way as to awaken long dormant embers in our hearts. Or we should say, the Holy Spirit is at work to kindle those embers. Still, not too many folks become profoundly spiritual in older seasons of their lives if they had not tasted faith earlier in their journey. However, that being said, there are without doubt, exceptions to that observable tendency.

#4 Produce a Harvest... beyond their wildest dreams

Producing fruit is not complicated. Fruitfulness is not a matter of successfully completing a complex set of spiritual steps or techniques. It is simply a matter of receiving. All the rest is the work of the Sovereign God. The simple reception of the Word makes one fruitful.

But, I don't want to give the impression that this is a purely passive experience for us. The very point to Jesus' word here is that it is active. God's Word stirs us to action as we produce a harvest both quantitatively and qualitatively....in breadth and depth...in other souls reached for God's kingdom sake and the depth of our own souls in good works.

The normal yield in a Palestinian field is 7-10 times what was sown. The emphasis in this parable is not the unproductive soil of the previous verses, but the ***miracle harvest of the good soil***. This is indeed the climax of Jesus' teaching about the parable. And notice a profound shift in the wording. While the previous three soils that inhibit the seeds germination or growth are spoken of in past tense verbs, the verbs here in verse 20 are present tense...signifying repeated and ongoing action. In other words, this process of harvesting keeps happening! The implication here is that any soil has the potential of being transformed into good soil.

Well, Let's pause to name this exciting truth: ***God has a harvest waiting to be produced through you!***
A harvest beyond your wildest dreams!

Let's get practical and personal: Faith and Hope will grow to our full potential as you grow in your capacity to produce a harvest beyond your wildest dreams.

Climax

When I think of good soil, I think of soil that is rich, soft, and deep. Your soul can become good soil!

- ❖ **Rich:** full of grace and mercy
- ❖ **Soft:** not hardened and resistant but soft and receptive
- ❖ **Deep:** no superficial but luxurious offering roots the perfect place to grow

Here is the story of a good soil person...whose life was rich...full of grace and mercy, soft...not hardened and resistant, and deep...not superficial but luxurious offering roots the best place to grow:

The late (he died tragically in a car accident in 1997) Don Winslow, a business professor at the college I attended. Don had deep roots, a soft and receptive heart for God, and was without doubt one of the richest (not wealth) believers, full of God's grace and mercy. Don had a sensitive attentiveness to notice students...noticed me even though I was not a business student. Invited me and another student out to dinner with his family...at a time I needed both a word of encouragement and a home-cooked meal. Here is what one student shared about Dr. Winslow:

Professor Winslow was more than my teacher: "I am where I am today, in large part, because he valued me, cared for me and saw a bright future for me. He was a difference maker in my life. He challenged

me to live out my faith not only as a businessman but as a husband, father and mentor. The Winslow family welcomed my wife and me, as well as scores of other students, into their home.”

Good soil people like Don Winslow live their lives with such everyday fruitfulness, their lives become an invitation for us to follow suit and live lives rich, soft, and deep...to God's Word.

Conclusion

Good Soil Prayer

Good soil, Lord, help my heart become good soil.

When I am like the path, hardened to You and others, help soften my heart.

When I haven't grown roots, toppled by temptation, forgive me and let me begin again.

When I let the worries and activities of life choke my spiritual growth,

untangle the thorns that strangle and let me grow in You.

Good soil, Lord, help me become good soil that receives the Sower deep into my heart.

Father, may all of us sow seeds of grace and bear fruit for your Kingdom,

As we follow Your Son into the world He loves! Amen

Hopeful Hearts! Hope had it's Hopeful Hearts Baby Clothing Ministry Saturday June 19, serving 16 families, 12 of whom were first time visits. These families included 26 children! More volunteers are urgently needed! If you are interested, the event is held the third Saturday of each month from 10:00-Noon. It is not work so much as it is greeting the new people and sometimes assisting them find the sizes they need. Let the Hope office know if you can help.

Hope Trash and Treasure: Yes, we are indeed talking about having Trash and Treasure again this year. Jan Baughman is again willing to head up the efforts, but she will need ample assistance. Trash and Treasure is a fixture in Canal Winchester with a 50-year track record that helps an amazing number of people. More than ever some people need this year's Trash and Treasure. **This year's sale will be Friday October 1 and Saturday October 2. Please hold off on donations until September! And large items until the Thursday before the sale.**

A Note from Dawn Rice on Operation Christmas Child: For those of you who may not know: Dave, the kids and I have spent the last 15 months renovating Dave's family home in Meigs County so that we can move in and be caregivers for his dad. Unfortunately, that job is still not complete, nor are we ready to move just yet. However, we have had to step down from all our commitments at Faith in order to focus on the remodel and his dad's care. Please know we miss you all and have kept many of you in our prayers since we last worshipped together. One of our prayers has been that we would find someone to take over the ministries we held so dear at Faith, particularly Operation Christmas Child. Those prayers were finally answered and it is my joy to announce that I am passing the baton of "Project Leader" on to **James and Heather Martin**. After faithfully supporting this ministry for the last 10-12 years, it is my prayer that you will continue to do so under the guidance of the Martins. Thank you to everyone who has ever donated, prayed, made food, decorated, or come to a packing party—it has been a pure joy and our great pleasure to have been partners with you! May God continue to bless this ministry and use it to spread the Gospel story of love and redemption to children around the world.

The Astonishing Power of Goodness

In July and into August, we will explore one of the threads woven through the entire Bible: **goodness**. Against the dark, foreboding backdrop of evil in our society and world, we long for expressions of goodness. Paul reminds us in Romans 12 *“Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.”* In God’s scheme of things, goodness has an astonishing power to overcome evil. We will explore this from many angles and along the way discover the true source of goodness. And how we can be agents of God’s kingdom of goodness, peace, and joy. If you want to read in advance, start with Psalm 34.

Worshipping at Hope UMC

July 4 ***“The Battle Between Good and Evil”*** Psalm 25 Communion Sunday

July 11 ***“God Alone Is Good”*** Exodus 33: 12-23; Psalm 34

July 18 ***“Goodness Is Active!”*** Acts 10:38; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 2:10

July 25 ***“Goodness Resists and Overcomes Evil”*** Amos 5:14-15; Romans 12:21

Worshipping at Faith UMC

August 1 ***“Creating a Goodness Culture at Church”*** Matthew 5:3-12

Sunday July 4...join us at Hope UMC at 10:00 AM for inspirational worship. We will give thanks for the many ways God has blessed our nation and we will pray for our nation in these most challenging days. As the title for this coming Sunday suggests, as we begin our new series on “The Astonishing Power of Goodness,” the battle between good and evil continues. Since this is a communion Sunday, we will look at this struggle through the lens of our own need for mercy.

“Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line dividing good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart.” Alexandr Solzhenitsyn