

What kind of sower would scatter his seed among rocks, and thorns, and even on a hardened path? Would we not call such a sower wasteful? Certainly, we would say that he is not being at all careful, but rather careless, even reckless.

Farmers take their planters out to the good soil in their fields where the seeds will grow. If you have a garden, you planted your vegetable seeds not just in the soil you had prepared, but even carefully in rows where you could walk in between.

Yet this is hardly what we see here before us in Jesus' parable. It looks like three-fourths of the seed sowed by the sower is wasted. That's far from being efficient. It just doesn't make good sense.

But this is the way it is. This is how the sower sows. This is how Jesus preaches the seed of the Word, and how He tells His preachers to preach it. Martin Franzmann puts it this way, (we just sang these words): "Though some be snatched and some be scorched, and some be choked and matted flat, the sower sows, his heart cries out, 'Oh, what of that, and what of that?'"

What of it? The sower is called to sow. He is called to scatter the seed everywhere. If it falls on rocky soil, what of it? If it falls on thorny soil, who cares? Even if it falls on the hardened path, and birds devour it, that's just how it is. Sow the seed anyway.

Preach the Word! This is the point here. Get up in that pulpit and preach it. Preach the Word "*in season and out of season.*" Preach it to those who appear to be listening, and to those who are fast asleep in the pew. Preach it to those who seem to be good soil, and to those who appear to be bad soil. Just preach the Word of God. Sow the seed. Be reckless, be wasteful, be careless. If it grows, it grows; if it doesn't, it doesn't.

In a certain sense preachers need to have a "who cares" attitude. This is not to say that pastors shouldn't care about their congregations or give a flip about who comes to hear the Word preached on Sunday morning. Pastors do care, and they do pray. They pray for their people. They pray for the Word to have success.

I am quite certain that every pastor wants to have only good soil in his congregation. He wants the seed of the Word to take root, and grow, and bear fruit in every single one of his members. But no pastor knows to whom he is preaching. He doesn't know the soil types of his members. He might think he knows whose soil is rocky and whose soil is full of thorns. But what of it? He is not called to analyze the soil in the pews. He is called to sow the seed.

Like Ananias in the Book of Acts, I would have hesitated to preach the Word to the man called Saul. He was persecuting the church ferociously. No way he was good soil. But that man became the Apostle Paul. The seed of the Word yielded one hundred-fold in him.

I might well have ignored Zaccheus up in his tree, rather than calling to him as Jesus did. That stinking rich tax collector had to have been thorny soil. Obviously, he loved the cares and

pleasures of the world. And yet, that man repented and is in heaven today. Zaccheus was good soil.

I might have been convinced that Simon Peter was nothing more than rocky soil. Well, look at him. When trouble and possible persecution came close in the courtyard of Caiaphas, he denied Jesus three times. And yet, Peter proved to be very good soil, yielding abundant fruit as an apostle of the Lord.

There is to be no guesswork in Jesus' church. Who would have guessed that a worthless thief, dying next to Jesus, would be in heaven today? I cannot look into your heart, nor can you look into mine. If we try to guess which soil we're looking at, we will take our eyes off God's promise in Isaiah 55: "*My Word...shall not return to Me empty...but it shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*"

The Word works. God's Word succeeds. But we don't know where it will succeed. We don't know upon whom it will work. The preacher is simply to trust in the Word of God. Preach it. Sow it. It will work on someone. It will succeed somewhere. There is no guesswork here. There is only God's promise.

As for you, do not attempt to guess which soil type you are. Don't go there. Instead, go to your baptism into Christ Jesus. Put your eyes on God's promises to you in your baptism. There is no guesswork here either. His promises are certain. You are baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection. Your sins are forgiven. This is not guesswork. This is assurance. You are forgiven. You are one for whom Christ died and rose again. Eternal life in heaven is yours in Jesus. Your baptism is all the evidence you need. It delivers the goods to you: forgiveness, life, and salvation.

No matter what soil type you think you are, you have a Savior in Jesus. Fix your eyes on Him. Doing so, how can you not bear abundant fruit? No guesswork here. This is God's promise. His promise to you. Amen.