

**How many of you are gardeners? (Let some tell about their gardens:  
What have you planted?  
How far along is it in growing?  
What do you use for fertilizing?  
How much time do you spend in the garden to make sure it grows?)**

**Tell about my experience in the big garden for Farmer's Market  
Doctoring Corn (DDT)**

**Organic verses non-organic  
Eating vegan and enjoying fruits and veggies – especially organic!**

**Scripture  
Jesus by the lake  
Not hard to picture that image  
Crowds so large he got in a boat and rowed out a little ways**

**Acoustics must have been good!**

Some of the commentaries I read said that there were many natural acoustic settings that existed in Galilee, including a cove near Capernaum, that would enable thousands to hear the voice of someone properly positioned. Perhaps Jesus was in that place, or one similar to it

**Maybe he saw a farmer spreading seeds and pointed to him for the people to see as well. (common sight)**

**Parable: Some seeds fell**

- **Path (birds came and ate them up)**
- **Rocky ground – not enough soil for deep roots, grew quickly but sun scorched them right away**
- **Thorns – choked them**
- **Good, fertile soil – produces a bumper crop!**

**Farming in Jesus' day would have been tough**

- **Fields in long strips with paths for walking on the sides**
- **Farmers threw out seeds lavishly on unplowed ground, knowing many of the seeds would be eaten by birds or walked on, or scorched.**

**Jesus says people who hear God's good news of the Kingdom are like this parable.**

**What do you think it means?**

**Jesus said (The Message)**

**<sup>18-19</sup>"Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn't take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person's heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road (or the path).**

As we look at our culture today, we see this happening, don't we? I spoke with numerous young people (and a few older too) when working on my doctorate of ministry. Asked if they were church-goers. Many of them said they didn't think it was relevant for their lives. Or they said they believed in God but they also believed in other forms of religion.

**<sup>20-21</sup>"The seed cast in the gravel (rockly soil)—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.**

Revivals - when growing up in the Baptist church – emotional, lots of moving worship, urgent preaching and great music. Hoards of people would “come forward” to give their lives to Christ or to rededicate themselves, some to be baptized and to join the church.

Our pastor said he really didn't like revivals – much emotionalism and not much depth in the experience. Didn't last too long for many.

**<sup>22</sup>"The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the kingdom news, but weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it.**

Some of us are just worry warts by nature! I used to be one of those as a kid. I worried about tornados and about people breaking into the house. My mom said, if you didn't have anything to worry about, you'd worry about that!"

I had one of our members send me a text just last night to tell me some good news about how things were turning out for her family after some difficult times. She said that having faith and trusting in God sure has worked out for her and is so much better than worrying all the time.

**<sup>23</sup>"The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the Good News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams."**

**Of course, this is the kind of soil we want to be.** Rich and deep, prepared with care and love and experience – completely organic, free from poisonous chemicals that would rob the fruit of it's nutrition and health.

We want to produce a huge crop of fruits too.

**So how do we become that kind of garden?** This is easy to see in the parable (this time, because Jesus spells it out for us, for a change.) But what are ways we cultivate the soil of our hearts for God's word to grow?

Worship, Study together, Devotional/prayer time, retreats, being a part of the family of God, valuing the more experienced, mature Christian's teaching, participating in outreach opportunities

What does a bumper crop look like? What are the fruits and veggies of this organic garden?

**Personal:**

Knowing our spiritual gifts/talents and using them for the Kingdom  
Teaching, singing, praying, working in the kitchen, hospitality,  
Visiting the sick, leading worship, organizing,

**How does the church look?**

Robert Schnase: "5 Practices of Fruitful Congregations"  
-Radical Hospitality  
-Passionate Worship  
-Intentional Faith Development  
-Risk-Taking Mission and Service  
-Estravagant Generosity

As we plan for the future of our church, together, let's lovingly and intentionally cultivate the good, soil of our hearts, that we, not only as individuals, but also as the whole church produce these fruits in abundance. May we be good examples of God's organic garden.

