

## 4 Pentecost / July 10, 2011

### *Sermon on the Sower*

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Lectionary Readings: [Genesis 25:19-34](#), [Psalm 119:105-112](#), [Romans 8:1-11](#), [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

***“Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.”*** I suspect he was seeking a bit of peace and quiet. After all, he had a busy schedule teaching, healing, walking from town to town and being persecuted. Crowds pressed upon him. He needed some time alone with his Father in heaven.

We all need time alone to cultivate our spirits. We need time to go and sit by the lake. What is your lake? Where do you go and take time to sit? Some of us use the lectionary as a lake of peace, taking time to read each sentence slowly until God speaks to our hearts in the words. Some of us turn to prayer, breathing a bit of peace into our full, busy minds. Wherever you go and sit, whatever you do (or not do) to renew yourself, do so with regularity and intention, with a sense that you are listening to God “with the ears of the heart” as the Rule of St. Benedict says.

Yesterday morning, as I was thinking about this sermon, I was talking with my daughter. She taught me a new phrase, “Wake and bake.” The phrase refers to what some of her friends who live in this area do when they wake up in the morning: they take a few tokes of weed until their brains are “baked.”

I will refrain from expressing any judgment here. Suffice it to say that I would rather “wake and lake.” I would rather spend time beside still waters. I strive to practice contemplative prayer each morning. I light a candle, burn some incense, bless myself with water, and gather my energy and attention into my heart so that the lake of the spirit rises around me like the tide giving me the strength to face another crowded day.

***“Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.”*** Jesus’ lake of peace is his Father in heaven. Not only does he sit by the lake, but also, when the crowds gather around, he slips out onto the lake in a boat. After all, he is the Word made flesh; he and his Father are one.

When a crowded day presses upon you and you feel sapped of life, where do you go to renew yourself? When the busy-ness of the world fills your mind with busy-ness and you feel lost, where do you go to find yourself again?

Some people get out on the river or a lake in a kayak or canoe and simply paddle. Others may go to a stream and fish their secret spots. Some climb mountains or walk in the woods. Others find solace in cooking a good meal and serving it with drinks on the deck with friends.

I go home and listen to the wind in the trees and the birds singing. I let the green field and woods below my house fill me again with their steady, growing life. There I feel content once more and sense life energy return steadily into my bones in the familiarity of the place I call home.

I believe it is from the vast ocean of peace where Jesus is one with his Father, that he teaches.

***“And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow.”*** The Parable of the Sower is told in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas. In Matthew and Luke Jesus says “The sower sows the Word”. The sower is therefore Christ himself, telling parables.

In the section that is left out of our gospel for today, Jesus explains why he teaches to the crowd in parables. He says it is because he only teaches the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to his disciples. The crowd consists of those who receive the Word-seed in the hard packed and stony ground of their hearts and it is snatched away or grows too quickly and withers because it has no roots. The Word-seed that falls on the hearts of worldly people is quickly choked out by the weeds of greed so that it never grows to fruition. But some Word-seed fall on the cultivated ground of a disciple's heart and grows to yield further seed so that the disciple, too, becomes a sower of the Word.

I have always thought of this as “the work of the Word”. We, as the Body of Christ, need to prepare our hearts daily, because the sower of the Word is alive within us through our baptism, through our Sunday Eucharist, and through our “Wake and lake” practices, whatever they may be. And the more our practices are built into our lives, the more those seeds will sprout and grow and fruit in our hearts. And then day by day, month by month and year by year as the decades pass and we live in faithfulness to the practices that grow Word-seeds to fruition, we too become sowers of the Word, planting seeds because we are rooted in Christ.

As Meister Eckhart preached, ***“The seed of God grows into God”*** and ***“What good is it that Jesus was born and walked the earth if Christ is not born today in the ground of my soul?”***

I found an interesting passage in the Gnostic Book of Thomas. It expands on the analogy of the sower and the soil. ***“The sun and the moon will give a sweet smell to you, and the air, the spirit, the earth and the water. For if the sun does not shine upon these bodies they will waste away and die like weeds or grass. If the sun shines on weeds, they become vigorous and can choke a grapevine. But if a grapevine becomes vigorous, casts its shadows over the weeds and all of the rest of the brush growing along with it, and spreads and flourishes, the grapevine alone inherits the land where it grows, and dominates wherever it casts its shadows. When it grows, then it dominates the whole land, produces***

***abundantly and makes the gardener even happier. For the gardener would have suffered much because of these weeds before finally pulling them out, but the grapevine disposed of them and choked them all by itself. So the weeds died and became like the earth."***

We are the grapevines planted and cultivated by the gardener. "Abide in me and you will bring forth fruit." Every word we hear, sing or say on Sunday morning sows and grows Word-seeds in the ground of our hearts. If that ground is cultivated and enriched by daily devotions it will take root and grow, in time, to fruition. If not, the weeds of the world will choke them. So, every morning, "wake and lake"! Seek the peace of the Lord. Work to grow the kingdom of God beginning in your our own heart. Then, in time, it will grow strong and expand as God's realm in the material world around us. Then, in time, Christ, the gardener of the ground of our hearts, will not suffer pulling weeds. Instead, Christ will watch with joy as God's realm grows outward from our hearts.

As Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans: ***"If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you."*** May it be so. Amen.