

Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

I sowed some seeds Friday. Parsley seeds to be more precise. The parsley seeds have been sitting in a custard dish on my kitchen counter for about two months. Back in April when I signed up for my garden plots, I bought seeds. I thought I'd get a head start so I planted inside according to the package directions: heirloom tomatoes, red peppers, sweet corn, cucumbers, watermelon, dill, thyme, cilantro, lettuce, oregano, basil, even catnip. The parsley package on the other hand, did not get planted that day because the package suggested said soaking the seeds overnight before planting. ***So I put them in a custard dish so that I could soak them that night, and that's where they stayed*** – on the counter in a custard dish. We have all those plants, but no parsley, because the seeds sat in a custard dish on the kitchen counter, ***unsown***.

I must tell you, planting starts was torturous. They came up, but watching them struggle to shed the seed caps tested my patience. So I helped them by removing them; I am a helping professional after all. The worst was that they took forever. After two months, I still have heirloom tomato and pepper plants and most of the spices that are only that are two inches tall.

Frankly, I just don't have the patience to wait for the plants to mature. I wanted results. That's why ***after about three weeks I sort of gave up on them***; I keep watering them, but because it was taking so long I assumed it was a failed experiment. Some of them I transplanted to my garden beds and they've done well, but ***my deck rail is covered with late learned bloomers that are just now taking hold***. I've learned that sowing

seed requires patience I guess, but it's better than not sowing seed at all.

St. Paul understands all this about seeds, and *used sowing seeds as an example for Christian living*. Speaking to the Galatian church members who argued about who is more right and who more wrong, Paul says this:

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.

Paul uses this illustration to bear out the fact that time bears out all that we do, good and evil. Perhaps the results are not as direct as we'd like, but *our actions are likely to produce similar fruit.* *And for that reason Paul advises doing what is good and right*, as opposed to what just "feels good" and "looks right".

It's tempting to believe that St. Paul is speaking about the people who have abandoned their faith and gone astray – bad people, weak people, misguided people. And while I'm sure Paul's words apply to wayward sinners, *obvious transgressors do not seem to be the focus of Paul's concern.* Lest they, or we, may be tempted to label others with this status, he makes it clear that *all of the Galatians are the offenders*, and *how we treat other when they offend affects the growth of the Kingdom of God.* So Paul's references to "reaping what you sow" speaks not to wayward sinners but to all the sinners in Galatia – that would be everyone should any doubt remain.

Paul intends his words for all of the faithful, advising them of that

much of the burden of sin resides in how they treat others when they sin – when they cross the lines of decency or miss the mark of righteousness and faithfulness altogether. Because they judged, condemned, gossiped and rated others on whether they adhered to their own self-proclaimed standards.

Immediately *before these words about reaping what you sow Paul directs the Galatians to **treat transgressors with gentleness, not judgment – to bear their burdens with them, and by doing this they will fulfill the law of Christ.*** He goes on to say that Christians are not to compare themselves favorably over against others, *but to judge only our own words and actions, or silence and passivity* (laziness). When we consider only ourselves, without saying "well so and so is worse" or "look how nice I am compared to...", " we become all too aware of our failings, both as individuals and as a community of faith.

Frankly, when we find fault in others, we focus the attention away from ourselves, and we are able to avoid and ignore our own failings. Some people become experts, spending their lives avoiding their own faults while pointing to another's; it's a skill we've all honed razor sharp.

The problem with judging others, it doesn't help us overcome the problem we avoid. It's rather like being in a row boat with a hole in the bottom. In order to avoid getting wet we exhaust ourselves bailing the incoming water, rather looking for a solution or a way to plug the hole. So long as we bail, the boat goes nowhere, the hole keeps gushing in water, and we aren't solving the problem. And we end up wet anyway.

When we who have been set free by the good news of Jesus begin judging others and comparing ourselves to them, favorably or unfavorably, we place ourselves back in bondage to sin; looking at what we have done and not what Christ has done for us. *To do this is not to receive the gift Christ has given us on the cross.*

In the face of the Galatian's arguments about who is what and which is better Paul sets them straight. All of their claims are equal – equal in that they mean nothing. *"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything."*

Our whole sinful human way of judging the world by our individual perspective leads nowhere. The seeds of love, faith, life, forgiveness, hope are not being planted; they're just sitting in a custard dish. For all our measuring each other gains us nothing, furthers nothing. Life is as lifeless and stagnant as it was before.

What matters is not who did what compared to whom, but rather what Christ has done, giving his life as a ransom for many. Giving himself away for the sake of others, even we who ignore & despise his love, so that love and life might grow in and through us. He desires that we extend the same mercy and forgiveness to each other as He extends to us because such compassion and kindness fosters new life and growth.

Jesus gives no heed to what others think of him or others. Jesus concern and actions focuses what His Father thinks of them, and His Father loves them despite their faults and failings. So, Jesus does the same. Rather than wasting his life figuring out who deserves to receive God's love the most, Jesus gives himself up for us all on the cross.

A seed of love and mercy are planted when Jesus's body is

laid in the tomb – the earth. Jesus didn't know the time table for it to grow and flower, *only that it is the way of life by the Father's promise*. Three days later he burst from the ground. The love, forgiveness and new life planted in Jesus Christ has born fruit in billions for 20 centuries.

It's not a quick method of changing the world. Most days, it *seems to take forever*, and we who want results now don't always have the patience to wait. It's *tempting to give up on people*, and judge them. But showering others with love and forgiveness – seasoned with honesty – *will not bear fruit on our timetable, but it will bear fruit*, and what we reap we will sow. Grace and forgiveness will reap grace and forgiveness. Judgment and condemnation will reap judgment and condemnation.

God invites us to participate in redeeming of the world by sharing the love shown to us in Jesus Christ. It is a road not traveled by many, but *it is the way that leads to abundant life*. Jesus himself says, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*"

Sowing the seeds of love, forgiveness, hope requires patience, and no one can guarantee the results. Still, it's better than not sowing seed at all. One thing I know for certain, unplanted parsley seeds in a custard dish on the kitchen counter never grow. That's why I planted those parsley seeds Friday. For good measure I planted more spinach and radishes. I know it's probably too late to plant them, but I have the seeds, and what harm can come from planting them, even if the odds aren't in their favor. I leave you with St. Paul's words:

"So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith..."

Amen !!!