

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Year A July 13, 2014

Theme: A Harvest Beyond Dreams

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In first century Palestine, the time of Jesus and his disciples, a time long before John Dear's mammoth planting combines, the sowing of fields was done **like this, by hand**.

Handfuls of seed were randomly cast about the field **in hope of even distribution**: no straight rows or scientifically proven proper spacing between plants.

Clearly some seed would land on the footpath, some on rocky soil and still more among the thorny weeds.

What's more, scholars suggest, unlike modern practice, the fields were **not plowed until after the seed was sown**, meaning some went deep and some quite shallow.

All of this obviously had an **impact on yield of harvest**.

Most farmers at Jesus' time counted themselves blessed if their yield was **7 to 10 times** what they had planted.

Thus, if they had planted a bag-full of seed, and if they harvested **10 bags of wheat**, they had a really good year.

Thus, for Jesus to propose in this parable a harvest of **"a hundredfold, or fiftyfold or thirtyfold"** was **a downright outrageous and unheard of, spectacular harvest!**

A seed that produced such a harvest would indeed be miraculous, a real gift from God.

As Jesus preached to the crowd gathered there on the shore before him along the Lake of Galilee, did **he feel like a farmer spreading seeds?**

Did he wonder how many would let his words be planted in the good soil of their hearts and **allow God to produce that incredible even miraculous harvest in them?**

Does he wonder it about us who hear his parable this morning?

The seed of his word **has been planted in us**: yes, for some it never takes root, for others it is choked off by materialism and the worries of the world.

But for most of us who are here, that **word has taken root** in us and is flourishing, striving toward its harvest.

We are here because we want to fertilize and nourish the seed of that word, keep it safe and strong and growing toward the harvest.

We want to protect that growth from dangers and anything that would weaken our resolve to bring the harvest to its fullest fruition for the Lord.

When the day of harvest comes, **we will show the Lord** how we have allowed his seed to grow in us and produce goodness and compassion in overflowing abundance.

We will have bushels upon bushels of **outreach to the lonely and hurting and sick and forgotten** to turn over to God.

We will have a lifetime's worth of **putting up with the abuse and unkindness of others without letting our own resolve** to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us be uprooted.

We will be able to **turn over to the Lord what was invested in us** because we have dedicated our lives to the harvest, to this amazing project God is doing in us and through us and with us.

But then, brothers and sisters, God will show us how our efforts, when combined with the Spirit that watered and fertilized that growth, produced a harvest of a hundred-fold what we thought, of fifty-fold what we imagined, of thirty-fold what we dreamed possible.

On the day God will joyously reveal the rich and abundant harvest God had been able to grow in us, a miraculous harvest beyond our wildest dreams and expectations.

All this because we allowed God to plant the seed of the word in our hearts, to take root there and grow – with God's help – to a rich and abundant harvest.