

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

July 16, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 55: 6-13

Responsive Reading; Psalm 65: 1-8

Epistle Reading; Romans 8: 1-11

Gospel Reading; Mathew 13: 1-9, 18-23

**Sermon Title: Good Clean Dirt**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; You've got to be the dirt, so be good clean dirt.

When I was a kid on the farm and we had a break down we would often have to go to town to get a part. If it were mentioned that we were dirty Dad would say, "Yes, but it is good clean dirt." That is to say that we got dirty doing necessary work.

In today's Gospel Christ is talking about dirt and its relationship to the seed. Interesting enough this gospel addresses two very different types of listeners with a message that is tweaked to address both simultaneously.

In both instances the seed refers to the word of God and the dirt refers to those hearing the Word. It is the job of the dirt to take that seed and grow it into an abundant crop.

If those hearing the word are like a hard walked-on path, they are people that don't understand the word and couldn't care less. Then the birds (the devil) swoop down and snatch the word and it is never available to that dirt, i.e. those listeners, ever again.

Those people that represent the thin soil over rocks are people who are easily excited by new things but all too often they are also the ones easily discouraged and give up on it.

Metaphorically speaking, these people do not have good roots so when things get tough, they abandon the endeavor. It is kind of like when a pastor has an alter call it is better if those responding come forward with a bowed head seeking God's forgiveness than those dancing down the aisle putting on a show for the congregation.

The thorn-infested dirt may well be the most common deterrent to dirt being "good dirt". That is when we the dirt are so distracted by things going on around us that that we just do not have time for the seed. The baby is crying, the lawn needs mowing, the car has a flat, and the boss is ticked off that we are late for work. "I got too many things to do to grow seed so I guess I will just have to take care of business."

Then we come to the good ground, i.e. the good dirt, and voila, the seed becomes a crop. Notice that not all good dirt produces at the same rate. Some 3000%, some 6000% and some 10,000%.

Not all good dirt produces at the same rate but all do a really good job for the sower.

This is where we see two audiences. If the sower is God then He is talking to all listeners enticing them to be “good dirt”. If Jesus is talking to those disciples that are going to be the sowers, then Jesus is warning them to not get discouraged when a whole bunch of listeners get excited but then fall away.

No matter how good a job we pastors do preaching the gospel, there will always be a whole lot of dirt that will never be good dirt. Jesus is telling us, and whoever else is trying to plant the seed, not to get discouraged. Just hang in there and keep trying. The “good dirt” will make it all worthwhile.

Our other readings buy into this premise. Psalm 65 talks about how great the seed, i.e. the word of God is, and what a blessing it is to be chosen by God to spread the word (the seed).

Isaiah encourages his listeners to get on the stick and seek the Lord while He can be found because it is the Lord that sends the rain and the snow to water the earth to “bring forth the bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater’.

That crop coming up from the seed is going to feed a whole bunch of future believers. If you are good dirt you will be part of a movement that is going to change the world and open up the gates of heaven.

How do we know this? In Romans Paul says, “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. But if the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

This is a pretty big deal. If you are “good dirt” you are God’s dirt and when He gives life to your mortal bodies you are assured that you will be going to heaven, and once there, you will not be “dirt” but rather you will be joint heirs with Jesus Christ your brother in His heavenly home.

Get those hands dirty, get that seed growing and enjoy your inheritance with Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior in His, and your Heavenly Home forever.

Hallelujah and Amen!