Reflections on The Parable of The Sower

One of the more well-known parables of Jesus is about the sower and the seed. The full text of this parable from Matthew’s Gospel is printed below. The use of parables is a technique Jesus uses to take something people are familiar with and teach them about a truth they need to understand.

Here are a few thoughts I had recently as I prepared to preach on this parable. I hope they will inspire you to meditate on the truth Jesus would speak to you. What I provide below are my God-inspired notes and reflections. I pray that these thoughts would inspire you to spend time in meditation and allow the Lord to speak directly into your heart.

1. If we are the soil, let us prepare for being planted. We may focus on preparing our own "soil" to receive God's TRUTH.
   - How can we break up the well-trod path, remove the rocks, pull the weeds, till the soil?
   - What must we do in order to RECEIVE the Word of God and walk in God's Grace?

Another option (or the next step) is to spend more time "SOWING SEED" into the lives of others.

2. If we are the sower, let us NOT ignore the potential in all soils.
   - Path
   - Rocks
   - Thorns
   - Tilled

Jesus - humans are not in the boomerang business, where the bread you cast out comes back at you. We are in the seed business, where you cast it forth and God takes it from there, and you never really know the impact your plantings have or will have.

- Leonard Sweet

3. Guidelines for Ministry:
   - Jesus went out and sat...the crowds gathered...are we sitting in places where people gather?
   - There is a need for active small groups as well as Bible studies. How do we get everyone involved?

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant." – Robert Louis Stevenson

Our job is proclamation. God's job, if you will, is conversion. Our job is sowing the seed. His job is reaping where it has been sown. Just do your part.
- Greg Laurie @harvest_events

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13: 1That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9Whoever has ears, let them hear." 10Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 11When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 12The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 13But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 14The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 15But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Blessings,

Pastor Kent
August Birthdays
4  Bob Umile
6  Dorothy Chamberlain, Diane Komp, Jean Massage, Kiley Mazzucco, Terri Wells
7  Laurie VanDeusen
13 Monya Zurkus
16 Cindy Anderson, Nancy Dineen, Alice Talbott, Mary Lou Woods
20 Ron Arena
21 Connie Nickou, Charles Steeves
22 Priscilla Blake
29 Sophia Appleton, Chelsea Marks

August Anniversaries
9  Stacey & Ken Cronk
11 Deborah & Brent Talbott
17 Heidi & Ernest Busch
18 Suzanne & Jim Lee
19 Priscilla & Bruce Blake
24 Terri & David Wells
28 Jesse & Courtney Rader

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
The 20th of every month - please send articles to Lori Cartwright at loriahlcart@gmail.com

Missed a Sunday? Unable to attend worship? You can catch the weekly sermon video at www.umcbranford.org

KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH WHAT’S HAPPENING AT UMCB:
www.facebook.com/umcbranford
Also check out:
www.facebook.com/unitedmethodistchurch
www.facebook.com/umcgeneralconference
www.facebook.com/NYACUMC

Please note: While social gathering restrictions are in place, no events (including Sunday morning services) are taking place at the church. Committee meetings and some activities are happening online. Please contact your committee chair for more information.

August Events
Wed, Aug 5, 7pm: Church Council
Wed, Aug 12, 6:30pm: L&P Advisory Council
Wed, Aug 19, 7pm: Faithful Stewards
Wed, Aug 26, 6:30pm: Staff Parish Relations
Fri, Aug 28, 6pm: Community Dinner

WEEKLY CALENDAR

MONDAYS:
10:10am Monday Morning Quarterbacking: During the quarantine we will be meeting by conference call. Please dial in at (425) 436-6385 using access code 841200#

TUESDAYS:
7-8:30pm Pastor’s Bible Study Group: Meeting online during the quarantine period. Please email Pastor Kent for a Zoom link or telephone number if you would like to join.

THURSDAYS:
10am Pastor’s Bible Study Group: Meeting online during the quarantine period via conference call. Please call (425) 436-6385 and use access code 841200#.

AA Online Meetings
For those in need, links to online and voice meetings can be found at: https://www.aa-intergroup.org/directory.php

“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”
Meet the New L&P Director

Hello, UMCB! I would like to take the time to introduce myself and provide some background information about who I am. My name is Amber Scovell and I am the new director at Learn & Play! I have experience working in classrooms with toddlers, preschoolers, and pre-k students. I have never worked as a head infant teacher, but I do have an 8 month old son who is keeping me on my toes, and teaching me a lot about that particular age group. I have a BA in Human Developmental Family Science and a minor in Children and Youth Services. I recently ended my time at Princeton Theological Seminary, where I acquired a MA in Christian Education and Spiritual Formation.

I am extremely passionate about childcare and cannot wait to support the children, families, and staff at Learn & Play.

WE ARE OPEN! The center officially reopened June 29th. We have many coronavirus procedures in place to ensure the safety of all staff and families. It is a blessing to hear the hallways full of laughter again!

Monday Morning Quarterbacking

An opportunity to dig deeper into the Sunday Sermon! Pastor Kent shares additional insight into the scriptures and the participants are encouraged to ask questions and share reflections on the material which was preached. Please consider attending on a weekly basis or occasionally as the Spirit moves. During the quarantine, we will be meeting by Conference Call at 10:10am. Please dial in at 425-436-6385 using access code 841200#.

Ministry While Practicing Social Distancing

WORSHIP: We will be worshipping online until the restrictions for social-distancing are lifted. We will be pre-recording our worship services which will be posted on the website early Sunday morning. Please visit the church website www.umcbranford.org to view the most recent worship service. [Look under the Sermons tab to view previous weeks’ services.]

PASTORAL CARE Please know that Pastor Kent is available for Pastoral Care “visits” either by telephone or individual Zoom meetings. If you would like to be in conversation to help process an issue you are dealing with or just to “catch up” please text or email Pastor Kent to arrange a meeting.

MEETINGS: Our committee meetings will be meeting via Zoom. Please go to www.Zoom.us and click “Sign Up. It’s Free” to create your account. All committee members will automatically be sent an invitation to their meetings. If you would like to receive an invitation to join a meeting, please contact Pastor Kent ahead of time so you can receive the log-in information.

FINANCES: As a result of not meeting in the church building, we are not receiving the offering during weekly worship. As you are able, please mail a check including your tithes and offerings to the church. We will be making weekly deposits of offerings which will enable us to stay current on all of our financial commitments. We are also minimizing expenses where possible.

COMMUNICATION: Brenda has resumed her regular working hours in the church office from 9am-2pm. In the interest of social distancing we are asking you NOT to visit the church office during those hours. If for some reason you must be in the office while she is working please be sure to be wearing a mask.

GOD'S WORK

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Small Study Groups Continue

Our Tuesday 7pm and Thursday 10:10am Study Groups continue to meet online during the quarantine period. Please email Pastor Kent for a Zoom link or telephone number if you would like to join the Tuesday evening study. The Thursday morning group is meeting via conference call. Please call 425-436-6385 and use access code 841200#

PRAYER THAT MOVES HEAVEN AND CHANGES NATIONS

“The Daniel Prayer is born deep within your soul, erupts through your heart, and pours out on your lips — words created by and infused with the Spirit of God quivering with spiritual electricity.”

Many people today find that their prayers don’t “work.” And like a broken cell phone, prayer gets thrown out as unnecessary “clutter” in most people’s lives. Anne has found that while prayer does work, sometimes the “pray-ers” don’t. So she turned to the prophet Daniel for help.

This book, based on Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9, will help you pray effectively for your nation, for your family, and for yourself. Anne answers questions such as:

- How do I know the God to whom I pray will listen?
- How do I know God cares about my prayer?
- How do I know God will answer my prayer?
- Why should I pray?
- Does it matter where I am when I pray?
- Are words in prayer all that matter, or does my attitude affect prayer?
- What difference does my prayer make?

Food Drive

We will be collecting food for the Branford Food Pantry. They need non-perishable foods such as canned vegetables, tuna fish, cereal, rice, peanut butter, jelly, soup, macaroni and sauce. Personal care items such as diapers and wipes as well as soap and toothpaste are also needed. You can drop off donations in the green bin located at the entrance to the church.

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Friday, August 28, 6pm

We will be making food and serving to any and all via "curbside" pickup. Please pull into the church parking lot and into one of the spaces. One of the volunteers will bring out dinner(s) to you wrapped up and ready for travel.

"Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

-- John 6:35 --

Joys & Concerns

Do you have a joy you want to celebrate?
Do you have a need that only God can meet?

We want to celebrate your joys and join in prayer with you! Your joys and concerns are important to your church family and we very much want to pray and rejoice with you in what God has provided and for his answers to your prayers. Please text your joys and concerns to Pastor Kent at 845-522-1233 or to his email at umcbpastor@gmail.com.

To my dear friends and Church family,
I want to thank so many of you for your calls and cards expressing condolence and blessings (and especially for letting me talk!). This time of dealing with my sister's untimely death from the Covid virus has been so painful. I can't imagine people dealing with this without knowing there's a God of love who is orchestrating our lives. I am so grateful for your prayers for me and my family.
Please accept a "virtual hug" and stay safe!

With love, M.E. Solomon
**SEWING FOR GOD**

**August: Still No Meeting at Church**

Wow, has it been a hot one already! We will continue to work on making tops for our friends across the street at Artis. As it looks like we may not get together until September, we should have a lot of tops to assemble into layers.

It's also time to start thinking of our Veterans. If you know of a group who might like to receive Veteran's Quilt from SFG, please let us know ASAP so one can be created for them.

We want all of our friends to have a wonderful and safe summer until we can meet - hopefully - in September.

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**Passing of the Peace - Video Edition**

Even though we cannot be in the same room, we can still share the Peace of Christ with each other! Please consider recording a short video of you and your family saying your name, a special message and end with "Peace be with you."

When recording the video: press start and count to 5 (in your head) before speaking. Then count to 5 (again, in your head) before hitting stop. This will give some buffer before and after so that the video can be stitched cleanly together with others.

Please send videos to umcbpastor@gmail.com by Friday to give Roger time to add them during editing.

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**Holiday Festival Canceled**

After much discussion around the issues of social distancing, having a way to serve lunch, and whether or not we can even bring in home baked goods to sell, it is with great disappointment that we have decided to cancel the 2020 Holiday Festival.

We are going to determine if we can find some other way to raise funds (at least part of what we usually make). If you have any ideas, please don't hesitate to share them with Ginger, Rosemary, Pastor Kent, or any member of Faithful Stewards. We will try to keep you updated. In the meantime, we hope that next year will be better. With that in mind, keep working on crafts and gifts to include in the 2021 Festival.

We appreciate your prayers.

Ginger
HOW TO ATTEND CHURCH ONLINE

GET OUT OF BED AND GET DRESSED
it will put you in the right mindset for worship

GO THROUGH YOUR NORMAL SUNDAY ROUTINE
minus the “hurry up, we’re late” part

GATHER TOGETHER AS A FAMILY
no multitasking; worship is a family activity

STREAM TO YOUR LARGEST SCREEN IF POSSIBLE
it will feel like you are really “there”

SING ALONG LOUD AND PROUD
it may feel weird, but it also feels weird to the people
leading worship in an empty room

PREACH WITH THE PREACHER
say amen, clap, shout and take notes; have a time of prayer
at the end; make your home a sanctuary
#IGiveUMC

to support your church!

Make a donation to your church in honor of an everyday hero who has made a difference to you. Then, post it on social media.

Your #IGiveUMC social media post can be either a photo or a video post. Get inspired by searching “#IGiveUMC” on Facebook or Instagram!

**Photo posts** are quick and easy. Simply post a photo of your honoree and include a written message.

**Video posts** can be created with your cell phone. Consider a “paper messages” video. Write a message on cards or poster board. During your video, show one page at a time so that viewers can read it.

Here is an example of a written post that could accompany either a photo or a video post. Be sure to include #IGiveUMC!

Today, I made a donation to my church in honor of my neighbor who sewed masks and gave them to neighbors and healthcare workers. I honor their service and dedication to the community. Join me, by sharing about an everyday hero you are proud to know and honor them by supporting your local church. Contact the church to find out how. Even $5 will make a big difference!

#IGiveUMC

Thank you for your participation!