

Today's worship is about experience and touch. We have been invited to have ashes placed on our heads or on our hands and experience what it means to truly be repentant of behavior which keeps us from seeing God's call upon our lives.

We soon will be invited to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion when we will be invited to touch and taste what grace is all about. We have placed our hands on the folks that will be traveling to Liberia to make a physical and spiritual connection to a people that we share a common history with even though our lives may seem so very different today. Today is a worship about experience and touch.

The next passage that we are about to read is a text of Scripture which is all about experience. If we were asked to describe the Word of God we would probably think about this book (the Bible) which is actually a collection of books. We would most likely say that the Word of God are these pages which are God's Word for us. But within these books we have another description of the Word of God. The Word of God as experience.

I am going to be reading from Mark 4:3-9. This is a passage which is commonly called the parable of the sower. Over the past few weeks we have been looking at several parables. Parables are stories that Jesus told where he uses everyday images to describe something with a deeper meaning.

Usually when we read this passage we think that the seed describes different types of people. But this morning I am going to invite us to listen to this parable in a different way. Rather than describing different people I invite you to hear this parable as describing different times in your life. Different chapters or different periods in your life.

Read Mark 4:3-9

God is always sowing seed in our lives. God is always providing us opportunities to see and experience what God is doing. Sometimes in our lives the seed is sown and we don't want to hear it. In the parable, this is described as seed that is sown on the path but the birds come and eat it.

So the Word of God is offered up for us to hear and to be guided by but our lives are such that we do not recognize what God is trying to say to us. We become too busy at school. We become too busy at work. We become too distracted in our home. We become too distracted by the latest technology gadgets.

We become too inwardly focused and we miss what God is trying to reveal to us. God's guidance is offered for us to follow but we miss it. But even though we may miss it others may see it and absorb it like the birds eating the seed.

There are other times in our lives where God seeks to give us guidance but our lives are rocky soil where there is not much depth. Maybe there have been times when our spiritual life has just been going through the motions. We come to church only because we have to. We read the Bible just to say that we have read it. We pray but we don't really listen to what God is saying.

As a result we have those periods of our lives when we feel as though a faith commitment is kinda there but not really there in a deep and trusting way. And so our faith gets tested and we feel as though there is no depth within us to tackle whatever is before us.

Then there are those periods of our life when we are like the seed that gets planted among the thorns. Those times in our life when we know that our faith is there but events in our life make us feel like we are choking and gasping for air. Those times in our lives when events happen which rock our world and throw everything out of whack. As a result we feel like we are being strangled by what is going on around us.

But this parable does not leave us strangled. The parable concludes with a word of hope. For sometimes in our life the Word of God is like seed that connects to us and feeds us. Sometimes in our life we are able to see God clearly and sense that God is taking care of us. Sometimes in our life we are able to sense what God's will is for our lives. Sometimes in our lives we overcome our struggles and God produces abundance through us.

Some of us have come into worship today feeling like our lives are the seed on the path and we are feeling scorched. Some of us have come into worship today feeling as though life is pretty rocky and we are not sure if our faith is strong enough to handle what we are going through. Some of us have come into worship feeling as though we are being strangled by events that are going on all around us.

If you come into worship today feeling any of those feelings know that this parable gives us a word of hope. This parable affirms that there are times in our life when God uses us to produce 30, 60, 100 fold. There are times when God has, does, and will use you to produce incredibly.

So this parable gives us wisdom to not be discouraged if we are in one of the chapters in our life when we feel weak in our faith. This parable encourages us to continue to trust and believe that there are still chapters to be written where God uses us to produce 30, 60, and 100 fold.

God yearns for our faithfulness and trust. God can and will use you to produce abundantly. We have to stick it out during the tough and difficult times and believe that God will lead us to a place of abundance. AMEN.

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