



WE REAP WHAT WE SOW

Summary of Sermon delivered on 21st June 2020

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Today is Father's Day. It is also the 3rd Sunday of the Pentecost season. As we hug our daddies to show deep appreciation to them, we also take this time to give attention to our Heavenly Father who is always with us as we worship Him. We are reminded that the Holy Spirit has come and is living inside us. God has sent the Spirit to bring about our adoption as His children, whereby we call out, "Abba, Father." (Rom 8:15) The Spirit is here to transform our life to be Christ-like, freeing us from bondage to sin, empower us to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:8) and help us to be effective in our ministries in the church.



At the after-service E-Greetings session last Sunday, we encouraged one another "DON'T GIVE UP and STAY ON COURSE." Our perseverance is not by our own strength but by the power of the Spirit!

We are all familiar with the Parable of the Sower in Mt 13, which is my reference for the sermon theme today: We Reap What We Sow.



This is in line with the Discipleship theme which we have adopted for this year, represented by the logo on the left. It is our desire to see every JCCian growing as a disciple to brothers and sisters. The big tree does not grow overnight, but over the years with right fertilizers and right conditions (sufficient sun, water and air). Similarly, our spiritual growth needs the right factors. Some questions to ponder as we go

through the Parable of the Sower:

- What have we been sowing into our lives?

- What have we been sowing into our ministries – Cell Groups, Sunday School, Young Adult Ministry, Dialect Ministry, etc. – that God has called us into?

Regarding a Life of Sowing, I would like to highlight 3 important points we can learn from Mt 13:

- 1) The seed's sower
- 2) The seed's killers
- 3) The secret to growth

In one sense, God Himself is the sower of the seed; i.e., His Word. As a case in point, Mt 13 tells us about large crowds gathering around Jesus, listening to many things that He told them in parables.

The process of sowing begins with God and the seed (God's Word) falls on four different types of soil: along the path, on rocky places, among thorns and on good soil.

The Parable of the Sower provides us two perspectives; firstly, as a sower of God's Word; secondly, as a hearer of God's Word, with the condition of the heart in focus.

As a sower

So, what can we do to invest ourselves in a life of sowing to be fruitful for God's Kingdom? As a sower, Jesus spent all of His 3½ years of public ministry introducing the Kingdom of God through preaching, teaching and healing the sick. Besides, He spent time listening to the Father's voice. Clearly, a life of sowing is God's idea. While Jesus instructed His disciples on many things, He Himself set the example – in listening to the Father's voice (Mk 1:35), in washing His disciples' feet, etc. In particular, when He allowed Himself to be baptized by John and resolutely proceeded with His public ministry of preaching and teaching, He was modelling Himself on the Great Commission for us to do the same as witnesses of the Gospel.

Recently, I heard this quotation by Rev Dr Chern, “Your life does not get better by CHANCE; it gets better by CHANGE.”

It is so true that we often resist change whereby things do not get better. We are so used to our spiritual life that we so easily remain as spiritual babes. What kind of disciples are we in the Cell Groups and in the ministries?

To change for the better at the ministry level, we need to pray and listen to God’s voice. To hear God’s instruction for us, we need to give Him time as we immerse ourselves in His Word. If we are not familiar with God’s Word, it is likely that we cannot hear or recognize His voice when He speaks to us.

Similarly, if we want to grow the Cell Groups, we need to press on with training and in building up one another, connecting via ZOOM to share our lives and pray. To reach out effectively, we need to make the first move in investing time to serve others and build relationships.

We need to be sowers of God’s Word, sowing wisely with our time and talents, sowing into lives for healthy spiritual growth.

As a hearer

The types of soil that are the seed’s killers represent the levels of fruitfulness in hearts. The soil either hinders or encourages the growth of God Word in us and our growth in Him.

a) *Hardened Heart.*

Mt 19:19 says, “When 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.”

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.

*“Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” – Mt 13:14-15
(Isaiah 6:9-10)*

These may be people who have lost their moral compass, engaging in serious sins such as idolatry and immorality.

b) Shallow Heart:

“The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.” – Mt 13:20-21

Today, are we in a situation that we allow the testing and trials in our life to overshadow God’s promises to us? Are we on the verge of giving up because our heart is shallow?

c) Crowded Heart:

“The 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.” – Mt 13:22

Basically, this describes a person who worries all the time and worries about everything. The situation we are facing now is literally a limit test to reveal whether our heart is crowded out by worries – worries growing to the point that we cannot sleep at night, worried for our loved ones that we feel restless, worried for our jobs because the economy is seeming to be collapsing, or worried for our future because God is totally out of sight.

Secondly, this can also describe people who are busy focusing on riches and the pleasures of the world whereby they lose interest in spiritual things.

Of the three types of hearts above, does any one belong to us? Hopefully, ours is the 4th type below.

d) Receptive Heart:

“But 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.” – Mt 13:23

Do you understand what God is saying to you today, and is your heart receptive of what He is telling you about facing the current situation?

It is very important for us to pray for wisdom and open our ears to hear God’s voice to understand what He is trying to tell us. Basically, our life cannot depart from His Word and His presence. Ps 1:3 tells us about a blessed person *“like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.”*

As we plant our roots firmly in God’s Word, His living water nourishes us spiritually and we become fruitful – whatever we do prospers.

The receptive heart holds the secret to our personal spiritual growth and the growth of the church. Whatever we do, as we invest in the lives of people, we keep watch over our heart so that it does not become hardened, shallow or crowded.

Let us pray that the seed that God sows into our heart falls on good soil. Pray that we in turn become fully invested in a discipleship life of good sowing so that we reap a breakthrough harvest this season.

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