

Doug Wysockey-Johnson: Seeds of Needs

Matt. 13:1-9; 18-23

Seekers, 7-10-05

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Seekers Church

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Seeds of Needs

[This sermon was given from an outline. The outline is collected here.]

I HATE SERMON TITLES.

*I can never come up with clever, witty descriptions.

*Whether serving my own church, or being a guest preacher, someone wanted a sermon title Wed., and most times I had no clue on Wed.

*So generate something vague like, 'Thoughts on God...', 'Reflections on forgiveness'

*Wouldn't you know, here at our church where we don't use sermon titles, I had one on Tuesday.

*I'll tell you when I get to it.

THERE HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING DIALOGUE GOING ON IN MY HEAD THIS WEEK WITH 3 CHARACTERS IN IT.

*One person in the Dialogue represents the particulars of my life; one person is me. Another represents events of the world; that person represented by a Sudanese woman in Dafur whose 18 year old son has been murdered, and she has been raped; Third person is the sower from Matthew, scattering all those seeds.

*For better or worse, my sermon this morning simply invites you into that dialogue.

BEGIN WITH THE PARTICULARS OF MY LIFE (a topic you will no doubt find riveting)

*Thinking about what an interesting time it is in my life.

*As far as work goes, it's FAW. It feels like call to me. It is demanding. It takes all I can give to it, and more. I never feel caught up, always feel like there is more I could and should be doing. Even though it is frustrating at times, I love it..

*Then there is home life—roles as a husband and father; home owner, bill payer, neighbor. It feels like call to me. It is demanding. It takes all I can give to it and more. I never feel caught up, always feel like there is more I could and should be doing. Even though it is frustrating at times, I love it.

THE REALITY OF MY LIFE IS THAT BECAUSE THESE TWO COMMITMENTS TAKE MORE THAN I HAVE, THERE IS TIME FOR ALMOST NOTHING ELSE.

*Life has pretty much boiled down to those two things.

*One of the things I have been aware of lately, is how out of touch with the world I feel.

(Sign of progress that I even feel that feeling)

*Lots and lots of opportunities come along to be apart of the larger world:

-Daily Seekers emails, neighborhood things, events and needs in DC

-99% of them I say no.

-I do not march. I do not participate in the community. I miss many of the things

That happens here. Until this week I could not have told you where Dafur is.

*I do not mean for that to sound like whining. It just simply is my life right now.

ANOTHER OF THE VOICES IN THE DIALOGUE

*Another voice was the voice of a village woman from Dafur

*She was in the dialogue only because I was preaching this morning, and Celebration Circle reminded me that that the ecumenical religious community was beginning a two week time of focus on it

*So at least I know now that the civil war in Dafur is about black African Muslims who were seeking greater independence from the Sudanese government in the capitol, Khartoum.

*The Sudanese government responded by bombing villages and backing Arab militias, who have destroyed villages, murdering people, raping women and girls.

*I hear that there is a peacekeeping force of about 2,400 hundred trying to police an area the size of France, when more like 12-15,000 are needed.

*I know that Congress and President Bush have unanimously agreed that it is genocide, but our government has done almost nothing.

*And so the xn community has been gathering, and is now today is kicking off 2 weeks of worship and political witness to call for an end to this genocide.

*What is going on in Dafur is just one example— a big one—of what is going on in the world around us.

**SO THERE IS THE PARTICULARS OF MY LIFE, AND THE EVENTS OF THE WORLD.
AND THEN THE THIRD VOICE HAS BEEN THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.**

*A farmer went out to plant seed.

–some went on a road, and the birds ate it

–some landed in gravel–sprouted up quickly, but had no roots, so died;

–some landed in weeds; as it grew it was strangled by other weeds;

–some fell on good soil, and produced an abundant harvest.

*Matthew records Jesus explaining the parable:

–the seed is the word of the kingdom

–the seed on the road is the person who doesn't take news in; the evil

One snatches it;

–the seed that lands on the gravel is the person who is enthusiastic at first, but doesn't let the seed go deep–dies off pretty quickly.

–seed in the weeds is the person who lets worry and desire for wealth choke off the word;

–the good earth is person who takes the news of the kingdom deeply into their hearts–that person produces a harvest that is way beyond what one person should be able to do.

*This interpretation makes a lot of sense for the community Matthew was writing to. Chapter 12 is about people accepting and rejecting

Jesus. In Matt's time, would have helped that community understand why some people were accepting the gospel message and some rejected it.

*Pretty straight forward.

BUT WALTER WINK REMINDS US THAT NO PARABLE CAN EVER BE EXHAUSTED; THEY ALWAYS CONTAIN MORE THAN WE CAN KNOW OR TELL.

*Goes on to say that parables function like Zen koans...to tease the mind out of familiar channels and into a more right brained view of things. "Parables have hooks all over them; they can grab each of us in a different way, according to our need."

SO I AM HEARING THIS PARABLE A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY THIS MORNING, PROBABLY BASED ON MY NEED, AND THE NEED OF THE WORLD

*The seeds are the word of the kingdom. But specifically they are the needs of the world, which is surely a part of the kingdom.

-calling them the seeds of needs. (THERE IS THE CATCHY SERMON TITLE!!)

*And God and the world and bad guys whoever else is scattering those seeds of needs promiscuously all around: I see them when I open the newspaper, when I turn on my radio or computer; in my neighborhood. Legitimate, good calls for action. And those seeds

join the seeds of needs from my family and my own needs. Flying everywhere

Like a groom at a wedding getting pelted by seeds from his drunken frat brothers.

*And I am the soil, and these seeds keep landing on me, and I am not sure which ones to take into the good soil of my heart, and which ones to let fall off.

–Should I go to the worship service for Dafur this afternoon, or should I go home and put my daughter down for her nap?

NOW THIS BECOMES A PARABLE ABOUT CALL AND DISCERNMENT

*I am a lousy gardener, but even I know that you can't plant too many seeds in one pot. If you try to put too many seeds in there, none of them will grow. For a seed to grow and thrive and bear fruit, it needs a certain amount of soil, and there isn't unlimited soil in my pot.

*Parker Palmer has written, 'Saying yes is not always a creative act'.

*MZB reminds us in her call cycle that we must release calls if there will be room in our hearts for new call to emerge.

**BUT: SEEDS PLANTED IN GOOD SOIL...SEEDS TENDED AND WATERED WILL GROW.
AND ACCORDING TO THE PARABLE, WILL PRODUCE A HUGE HARVEST.**

*these words from Quaker Thomas Kelly, written in 1941:

But God, more powerfully, speaks within you and me, to our truest selves, in our truest moments, and disquiets us with the world's needs. By inner persuasions He draws us to a few very definite tasks, our tasks, God's burdened heart particularizing His burdens in us.

* The seeds of needs are great...they are flying everywhere. But all of these writers remind us that there is not room in our pots for all of them. What we are asked to do is listen. It is what Jesus said at the start and the end of this parable. LISTEN.

-Try to understand if this is a seed that I am to put in my good soil. Is this a seed for my good life energy? If it is call, regardless of how ridiculous, if I tend and water it, it will grow and bear amazing fruit.

ANNA HOVDE STORY:

-Began with her reading a cover story about the AIDS epidemic in Africa, after a typical day at home.

-which led to her contacting an aid organization called People to People, which led visiting Ethiopia to volunteer, which led to

her visiting again, seeing the need for computers in hospitals, which led to her starting her own NGO which led to her seeing more need which led to her founding a school of social work in Addis Ababa so that now there is personal care for children and others who are scared and in need.

–All this led to a simple, unassuming woman in FAW’s network who had never written before being moved by Anna’s story so that she wrote it up in our last issue of the magazine.

–Which led, on Friday led a man named Desta to email me from Ethiopia saying he gets FAW magazine, and was moved by the story about his country, and how can he get in touch with this woman?

CONCLUSION

*I am not going to Ethiopia. I am not even going to the worship service at the white house.

*I will go home, put Isabel down for her nap. I may even take a nap.

–Mostly I feel ok about that. Isabel and Soren are taking up a lot of room in my pot these days, and for that I am glad.

*But the seed of need for Dafur is someplace there in my heart.

–the least I can do is listen.

*So for these next 2 weeks I have decided that I will hold the people of Dafur in my heart. It may well begin or end there. Possibly a

letter or phone call to a politician.

*The seeds of needs are flying. What is planted in your good soil?