

## **“Be Spiritually Persistent”**

Luke 8:4-15

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For the next four Sundays, we will explore Jesus’ parables and learn spiritual lessons. Among many Jesus’ stories, ‘the parable of the Sower’ is one of well known parables and a popular story among the gospels. You can find this similar parable in all other Gospels. The word, “parable,” means “riddle.” The very nature of a parable is that a person must figure out the meaning of the parable and then apply that meaning to one’s life.

Today’s parable looks quite easy, but no disciples and a large crowd didn’t understand what their master was talking about. Traditionally, this story has been understood that we want to prepare ourselves to be really ‘good soil’ so that we need to make ourselves ready to receive the word of God and bear “many fruits”. This perspective has more focus on soils such as our spiritual readiness and willingness to accept God and Jesus as our Savior, rather than emphasizing the role of a farmer’s act to plant the seed. I want to make sure with all of us that Jesus’ main concern and focus was the sower’s tenacious and persistent attitude and acts, not varieties of soil. Simply speaking, today’s parable is all about God’s work with the seeds. The main actor and key word in this story is neither you nor me or our efforts. Spiritually speaking, the whole point is that we want to know about our God like a farmer and God’s persistent acts and ways to care, and engage in our lives. The ultimate end of our Christian faith is to be like Jesus and to pursue God’s life on earth. The parable of the Sower spiritually challenges us with these questions: How persistently do you perceive your God in your daily life? Is your God a distant God to you or a closer one dwelling in your hearts? Do you feel His presence for sure?

In order to understand Jesus’ parable, we need to go back to Jesus’ times and understand the first century Palestinian agricultural life and the act of sowing. A sower is not careless when he scatters the seed along a path, thorn or soil, which has no depth. He did so intentionally because the path which villagers walked on, and the ground with thorns and shallowness was plowed up to receive the seed. Plowing came after sowing. This background helps us understand ‘sowing’ is more important than ‘soil’ in this parable. God, a farmer plants the seed of Jesus Christ everywhere. Once the seed is sown, whether it springs up or not, it is really up to conditions of the soil. The most important point in this parable is the farmer’s tenacious and persistent attitude to spread seeds until the seeds sprout and grow. The seed of Jesus Christ is a symbol of

life and potential to grow and prosper. We are recipients of the seeds which were sown in good soils. This is what God does for us! God never gives up on us and continues to work in us until we see God's presence and work in us. This parable teaches us an important spiritual principle. Our farmer, God, takes a risk in planting seeds. Simply we matter to God and God loves us this much! God will continue to work for us until we are able to produce a crop.

How do you sense God in your daily life? Specifically, how do you see God's presence in your daily routine? I challenge you to think about your faith. How do you make your intentional effort to feel God's presence in you? Richard R. DeLillio, a professor at Catholic University of America, shares his spiritual insight how God works in each of us:

Our God knows this and so when he calls us or wants our attention, He never pushes. He simply suggests a certain direction with a gentle "nudge!" ... God uses this particular time [spiritual pause and prayer] to point out another way, and so he gently "nudges" us in that direction. God's "nudge" is simply saying: "Stop resisting and start listening. There's another way." ... God's "nudge" is wrapped in God's love and concern that we live our lives to the fullest. Listen to these words from St. Francis de Sales: "*God takes pleasure in seeing us make little steps and, like a good father holding his child's hand, He will conform His steps to ours, quite happy not to go any faster than we can walk.*"<sup>1</sup>

The ultimate end of our faith journey is that we walk humbly with God being open, sensitive and persistent. Listen for God's gentle voice!

Tilda Norberg shares her spiritual insights in her book, *Ashes Transformed*. "Ask God to make you aware of divine nudges in your life. What has God said to you through recent incidents? What was God saying to you in that unexpected phone call? in that "coincidence"? Now pay attention to your hunches, your impulses. Obviously, not every hunch or impulse is a message from God, but does God sometimes choose? Call an old friend? Take a nap? Go for a walk in the park? Read a certain book? Play with your kids? Offer forgiveness to someone who hurt you? Record your impulses in your journal. If your impulse is not patiently foolish, will not hurt anyone, and seems consistent with the gospel, try following it. See what happens." I hope that you will hear God's special message and calling for your lives. We need to practice the tenacity and persistence in our faith. These are God's tangible signs that He is with us intentionally!

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<sup>1</sup> <http://livetodaywell.org/?p=699> Accessed July 8, 2016

The ultimate goal of Jesus' ministry is to build and expand the reign of the Kingdom of God. Knowing Jesus Christ is to understand the meaning of the Kingdom of God. It is not a concept of 'territory' or 'spiritual home in heaven' after death, but it is more like an "active progress" where God is working and "a place" where "God reigns" wherever we are in our lives on this earth. The very nature of a parable is that a person must figure out the meaning of the parable and then apply that meaning to one's life. Jesus' parables give us a full sensitivity of God's presence. We constantly expand our boundary to wherever we go and live. We boldly move forward no matter what risk we are going to encounter. God wants us to see a farmer's attitude and take it as ours!

How about your faith? As the farmer works with the soils, God works with you. We can think about how the conditions of soil represent the human conditions and the realities of our lives. We all endure rocks, the seeds inability to root, and thorns. We all live among hurts and wounded hearts, anger and hatred. These "choke" us, don't they? Isn't that an accurate description of our reality?

Where are you, your relationship with God in the journey of faith? Are you accepting Jesus Christ and bearing fruits or is your life still on a rocky, thorny path? It doesn't matter to a farmer, because God will continue to love you, and keep "sowing" the seed for you until you are ready to receive him in your hearts. Sometimes, there seems to be no way, nothing possible, but God will make a new way for you. God want us to grow and bear fruits through Jesus Christ in our hearts. He will heal our wounded hearts, mend our broken relationships, and bring peace and justice in our world. Christ already stands at the door of our heart and asking for our welcome. If we do not let him in, he cannot come into us. Jesus, but simply our life situation is not ready to receive him yet. God wants to save us from our pain and trouble, reach out to us and save us from where we are in despair and from "choking" circumstances. That is the seed that God gave in us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Why don't you receive it and make it grow in your life? Amen.