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Valley Church
A Grace Harvest

Matthew 13:1-9; 18-24

Evangelism is the declaration of the gospel. Sadly, much of what's sold as "the gospel" today is an inferior substitute for the real thing. The true gospel is 100% good news. There's no bad news in the good news. The original gospel signaled a great joy for all people. It was—and remains to be—an announcement about JESUS.

We can do our part in evangelism, but only God can reach the heart. God won't do our job – we are to sow. We can't do His job – He is to grow. We learn this in the interpretation that Jesus Himself gives in our theme text. There are always three players in evangelism: you, the lost person, and God. Each has their own part to play. Evangelism requires three players, but salvation only required one. There's only one player in the work of reconciling the world – God Himself.

1. Our Part is _____ the Seed

Matthew calls the seed, "*the Word of the kingdom.*" In Luke's version of the parable he puts it this way: "*Now the parable is this: the seed is the Word of God.*" It's easy to understand why Jesus would compare God's Word and the message of the kingdom to seed, because a seed is productive. The very purpose of a seed is to produce fruit. Do you know how a believer is produced from an unbeliever? By having the seed of God's Word planted in his heart.

2. Others' Part is _____ the Message

Do you know what makes the Word of God different from every other book or message that you'll ever encounter? You read God's Word with your eyes. You hear God's Word with your ears, but you receive God's Word with your heart.

3. God's Part is _____ the Harvest

All a farmer can do is sow the seed. Once he does that the harvest is in God's hand. All the fisherman can do is throw his hook in the water. After that, it is up to God as to whether or not he catches any fish. Our job is to sow. God's job is to grow. The key to reaching a lost person isn't the presentation of the message. It's the penetration of the heart. The presentation is our part. The penetration is God's part.

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS AND PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Icebreaker Question:

1. Regarding houseplants, do you: (a) Talk and sing to them like friends? (b) Forget about them till their leaves fall off? (c) Just hope no one gives you one?

Personal Life:

2. Which of the four types of soil best describes your response to the Gospel when you first heard it?
3. How would you describe the root system of your spiritual life now?
4. In the period of your life when your spiritual life was the most unfruitful, what was the main reason?
5. What was the main factor of the time you produced the best crop?

Ponderings: Matthew 13:1-23—Parable of the Sower

6. What is a parable?
7. What four types of soil does Jesus mention? What characterizes each? What happens to the seed in each kind of soil?
8. What does Jesus' explanation of the parable (vv. 18-23) reveal about the seed? About the various soils? The fruit? The farmer?
9. What do parables accomplish that simple and direct speech lacks?
10. What is your initial reaction to this parable?
11. Why do you think Jesus told this parable?
12. What is the crop that the seed is supposed to produce?
13. Why do so many people misunderstand the Gospel?

Promptings:

14. Have you ever personally led someone to faith in Christ?
15. How would you describe your current level of passion for seeing people come to know Jesus? Why do you think this is the case?
16. Is there anything you learned from this parable on sowing spiritual seeds that helps you to see evangelism from a new perspective? Discuss...