

Sowing the Faith

7th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, July 12, 2026

Hyannis Congregational Church

Genesis 25:19-34, Psalm 119:105-112, Romans 8:1-11, & Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Few things reveal a person's character more than a garden. You cannot rush a tomato. You cannot command rain. You cannot argue a seed into sprouting. Gardening—and farming even more so—teach patience, humility, persistence, and hope. Every spring, farmers hitch machinery to tractors, prepare fields, and trust that months of labor will someday become a harvest. Gardeners loosen the soil, pull weeds, water faithfully, and wait.

Every seed is an act of faith. You bury something that appears lifeless in the expectation that God will bring forth life. That is exactly how Jesus describes the kingdom of God.

In Matthew 13, Jesus steps into a boat, pushes away from shore, and begins teaching with one of His most familiar parables. "A sower went out to sow."

He tells of seed scattered generously across every kind of ground. Some falls on the path, and birds carry it away. Some lands on rocky places where it sprouts quickly but dies beneath the hot sun because it has no roots. Some falls among thorns that choke its growth. But some falls upon good soil and bears fruit—thirty, sixty, even one hundred times what was planted.

Then Jesus tells us plainly: the seed is the Word of God, and the soils represent the condition of human hearts. Most of us immediately begin asking, "What kind of soil am I?" That is an important question and one I want you to consider. But today I would like us to ask another.

What kind of sowers are we? Because Jesus doesn't simply call us to become fertile soil. He also sends us into the world carrying the seed. The Church has always been a community of sowers. Our calling is not merely to admire the seed. It is to scatter it. That changes everything.

Notice something about the farmer in Jesus' story. He is almost extravagant with his seed. He does not carefully place one kernel here and another there. He broadcasts it everywhere.

Along the path. Into rocky places. Among thorns. Across good soil. To modern ears that may sound wasteful. But God's grace has never been stingy. The Gospel has always been scattered farther than human wisdom would recommend. Jesus preached to fishermen and tax collectors. He welcomed children and sinners. He ate with people respectable society avoided. He even preached to those who would later reject Him. God keeps sowing because God never gives up on people.

Oftentimes we are much more selective than God. We decide who seems interested. Who is worth the effort. Who probably won't come. Who has been gone too long. Who lives too differently. Who asks too many questions.

But Jesus simply says, "Keep sowing." Because only God knows when a heart has become ready, the seed may lie unseen for a long season before it springs to life. Every farmer knows that growth is often hidden before it becomes visible. That is true spiritually as well.

Our first reading from Genesis reminds us that even God's promises often unfold slowly and imperfectly. Isaac and Rebekah wait years before children arrive. Even then, Jacob and Esau begin struggling before they are born. Later, Esau trades away his birthright for a bowl of stew because immediate hunger blinds him to lasting blessing.

How often we resemble Esau. We settle for what satisfies today rather than what nourishes forever. Our culture offers countless bowls of stew. Entertainment without purpose. Success without integrity. Comfort without commitment. Pleasure without discipleship.

The Church exists to keep planting something better. Not temporary satisfaction. But eternal life in Christ. Yet sowing the faith requires patience because seeds rarely become crops overnight.

Psalm 119 gives us another beautiful image: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Imagine walking through a garden after sunset. Many of us have done it. Perhaps checking irrigation and closing a gate. Looking one last time at tomatoes before bed. Without light, every root becomes a stumbling block.

Every row disappears into darkness. Every step becomes uncertain. But place lanterns along the garden path and suddenly you can walk safely. The destination has not changed. The garden has not changed. Only your ability to see. God's Word is that light.

Notice the psalmist doesn't say God's Word is a stadium floodlight showing every mile ahead. It is a lamp. Enough light for the next faithful step.

Faith often works that way. God rarely hands us the entire blueprint. Instead He illuminates today's obedience. Love this neighbor. Visit this friend. Invite this family. Teach this child. Serve this community. Forgive this enemy. Plant this seed. Then tomorrow He lights another step.

As disciples, we become bearers of that light ourselves. Our lives help illuminate the path that others are afraid to walk.

That brings us to Paul's words in Romans. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Those are among the most liberating words in all of Scripture.

Seeds cannot grow in concrete. Neither can grace flourish beneath constant shame. Many people outside the Church assume Christianity is primarily about condemnation. They expect judgment before welcome. Criticism before compassion. Requirements before relationship.

But Paul announces something radically different. In Christ there is no condemnation. There is new life. The Spirit breathes life where death once ruled. The Spirit softens hard ground. The Spirit removes stones. The Spirit uproots thorns. The Spirit prepares hearts for the Gospel.

That is important because changing soil is not ultimately our job. Sowing is. Growth belongs to God.

Paul reminds us that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in believers. That means we never sow alone. The Holy Spirit is always working beneath the surface long before we ever arrive. That should encourage every congregation.

Sometimes churches become discouraged because they measure only attendance. Only budgets. Only visible results.

But farmers understand there are seasons when much is happening beneath the soil. Roots are growing. Moisture is gathering. Life is forming unseen. Faithfulness is often invisible before it becomes obvious. That speaks directly to our own ministry together.

Every ministry this church undertakes is really an act of sowing. Youth group plants seeds. Bible studies plant seeds. Community meals plant seeds. Movie nights on the church lawn plant seeds. Conversations over coffee plant seeds. Helping a grieving family plants seeds. Supporting local schools plants seeds. Serving at community celebrations plants seeds. Sharing produce from a garden plants seeds. Even smiling at someone who feels forgotten plants seeds.

Some of those seeds will sprout immediately. Others may lie dormant for years. Some may never seem to grow while we are watching. But God keeps working. One of the greatest temptations facing the modern Church is believing ministry happens only inside these walls. Jesus never believed that.

If people are not coming to the church, then the church must joyfully go to the people. Our mission is not simply maintaining a congregation. It is cultivating the kingdom. That means our community matters. The people who never attend worship matter. Families who feel disconnected matter. Children who have never opened a Bible matter. Ranchers working every Sunday morning matter. Young adults searching for purpose matter. Senior citizens living alone matter. Seasonal visitors passing through matter. People carrying hurts they never speak aloud matter.

Jesus died for every one of them. So we keep sowing. Sometimes that means inviting someone to worship. Sometimes it means serving without expecting anything in return. Sometimes it means listening more than speaking. Sometimes it means showing up during another person's difficult season. Sometimes it simply means living such gracious lives that others become curious about Christ.

Every Christian is a walking seed bag. Every conversation is another opportunity to scatter hope. Every act of kindness becomes another

planting. Every word of encouragement becomes another seed. And because God gives the growth, no seed is ever wasted.

Think again about a garden path at dusk. The lights do not exist for themselves. They exist so others may safely find the garden.

Likewise, the Church does not shine for its own admiration. We shine so others may find Christ. Our buildings. Our worship. Our music. Our fellowship. Our mission. Our outreach. Everything points beyond ourselves to Jesus.

The goal is never merely filling pews. The goal is filling hearts with the love of Christ. And when hearts are filled with Christ, pews often follow. But even then, the harvest is never ours. It belongs to God.

Imagine what could happen if every member of this congregation intentionally planted one seed every day. One invitation. One prayer. One encouraging conversation. One act of generosity. One expression of Christ's love.

Not because every seed would immediately produce fruit. But because over weeks... Months... Years... God would cultivate a harvest beyond anything we could imagine.

Jesus promised that good soil produces thirty, sixty, even one hundredfold. God specializes in multiplying small acts of faithfulness. One invitation may change a family. One child reached may bless generations. One kindness may become the turning point in someone's life. One prayer may be the beginning of someone's salvation story. That is why we never stop sowing.

Ours is a hopeful calling. We are farmers of grace. Gardeners of mercy. Lantern bearers along God's garden paths. The world around us is hungry for hope. Many walk in darkness. Many have never heard that there is no condemnation in Christ. Many have never experienced a church that welcomes before judging and loves before demanding.

So let us prepare the soil through kindness. Let us illuminate the path through God's Word.

Let us trust the Holy Spirit to do what only the Spirit can do. And then let us sow. Sow generously. Sow faithfully. Sow patiently. Sow joyfully.

For the Lord of the harvest is still bringing life from tiny seeds, still shining light into dark places, still transforming hearts, and still gathering His people into His everlasting kingdom.

Amen.