“Sowing the Seeds of Love”[[1]](#footnote-1)

As a young person I was not a gardener. Gardening was too close to the family nursery business where from ages 14 to 21 I worked every summer and many weekends chopping and pulling weeds all day long often by myself in the back fields. It was hot, lonely and boring work. It had to be done and as my hourly wage was the lowest I got to do it. Having a flower garden or a vegetable garden was not a hobby that appealed to me it was too much like work. Things have changed as I have gotten older and further away from those days in the fields.

Now I enjoy getting my hands dirty. I enjoy seeing something I planted growing and flourishing. Planting and caring for flowers and shrubs, as Dale Thompson will tell you, is satisfying. The gardener can see the results of his or her work in how it beautifies the area bringing in butterflies, bees, and birds which are nourished by the blossoms. The flowers also bring in humans who are nourished by the colors and layout of the garden.

More recently I have found enjoyment in vegetable gardening. Look just over the fence at the small parish garden that is growing like Topsy. Already there are tomatoes and squash that are ripening. The produce from that garden will feed people, some of the many who come to Seven Loaves pantry to get food for their families.

When we started planning that garden we were led by Alecia Moroz to use a method called square foot gardening. The plots are marked off in squares and in each square one carefully plants a few seeds evenly spaced. In each square a precise number of seeds are planted according to the type of vegetable and the room it needs to grow. This type of gardening is very different from the farmer in today’s parable.

In ancient Palestine there was no square foot gardening. Neither were there mechanical devices for sowing seed. Rather the farmer walked the tilled land broadcasting seed by hand. The farmer would simply fling seed on the plowed earth as evenly as possible so that no seed was wasted. Seed was not available from Southern States. Seed was saved from the previous harvest. In the case of wheat it was seed head that did not get ground for flour. Seed was precious, because seed became food. If the seed was wasted by tossing it on untilled soil there went a loaf of bread. If seed was wasted by putting too much on the tilled soil there was a mouth that went hungry in winter. If seed were wasted on unproductive soil there was a belly that ached through the night unfed.

The Parable of the Sower tells us how God is like a farmer sowing a field of wheat. Yet unlike the farmer God flings the seed of love and compassion everywhere. God is prodigal in how that seed is distributed. It falls on good soil, on the hard compacted soil of the path, on rocky ground, and in with the briars. The word of God catches hold in different ways among different types of people—shallow, fertile, stubborn, resistant, hopeful, negligent. The difference between the farmer’s seed and God’s seed is that while both are extremely precious, the farmer’s seed is limited. God’s seed, the gift of love, is limitless.

The farmer chooses and prepares a specific plot of land for planting. The farmer selects land that will produce abundantly. The farmer tills the soil, pulls out the rocks, stumps, and weeds in order to give his precious seed the best chance to produce. Undoubtedly God seeks to prepare you and me to receive the precious teachings and commandments, but God does not limit the distribution of love just to those who are best prepared and most worthy. God showers love on everyone like it was worthless. God, who as scripture tells us, is love, cannot help but send love out everywhere. God wants it to catch and take hold. God knows that each of our souls has rocky, thorny, weedy places and fertile places. God wants to give every one of us the love we need and deserve because we are all God’s children.

It is up to each of us to make a place for the seed of God’s love to flourish. We can receive God’s love and nourish it like the farmer or we can let it fall away for the birds to eat. We can tend that love like the diligent gardener or let the briars and weeds of the world take over and choke it out. We can till the soil in preparation for receiving the seed of love or ignore the fields of our hearts and let God’s love and grace go to waste.

Until Dale prepared the soil and planted the flowers the earth was waiting to be transformed. Until the team set up the raised beds and filled them with compost, the seeds were ready but did not have a place to grow. Until Mary and Pete took notice and cleared the weeds to put down sod, the ground produced mostly unsightly weeds. God’s love is here ready to germinate like so many seeds and to flourish like so many gardens and lawns. But it needs us to tend a place in our hearts to receive and allow it to grow. Not just in the enthusiasm of the moment, because, like these gardens and lawns, it takes constant care to take hold and flourish. Otherwise, it turns brown from lack of water, the weeds choke out the flowers and vegetables, and the gardens of our hearts return to place of hardness, resentment, and darkness.

The parable is not so much about where the seed lands as the fact that the seed is spread on each one of us whether or not we are worthy to receive it. The question is not what kind of ground are you, but what kind of ground do you want to be? It is our choice. It just takes a bit of care and God’s love will grow like those zucchini, Dale’s tulips, or the lawn into something lush, beautiful and transformative that is the you that God knit together in your mother’s womb; the true and wonderful you that the world needs now more than ever.

1. Thanks to Tears for Fears for the inspiration song title I borrowed for this sermon. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)