

**Seed Sowing in Paul's Day, and Today**

- Sweet corn seed; used to plant all time with Dad, garden, spring; in Aug, pick ears off stalk, enjoy del sweet corn. Have to plant this seed in good soil; won't grow if rocky/thorny/dry footpath. But powerful; when you plant in rich, black dirt, then grow up into del sweet corn we love.
- God's Word like seed, not sweet corn seed, but seed that grows faith. In parable in today's gospel, Jesus teaches that when his word planted in hearts rocky/thorny soil/dry footpath, faith won't grow. But God's word powerful, so powerful, 1<sup>st</sup> Lesson: **"It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Is 55:11)**. So when this powerful seed planted in hearts like rich, black dirt, then seed God's word grows up into strong faith.
- Seed sowing/planting takes place whenever God's word proclaimed in purity/truth, whenever: come to church, listen sermon, sing hymns, take Communion, come to Bible class, read Bible at home, children study at St. John's school – God sowing his seed in people's hearts so will grow up into faith. We see this happening today, and in Apostle Paul's day. Acts 18 gives us snapshot of seed sowing in Paul's day; and I think seed sowing in Paul's day can teach us something about seed sowing today.
- Ac 18 begins vs. 1-3. Lot of travel detail there; toward end of 2<sup>nd</sup> miss jny; spreading gospel around Med Sea; here in Greece. Meets A&P, tentmakers; since Paul also knew how make tents, developed nice rel; became friends; Paul stayed, worked with, shared gospel with new Christian friends.
- What learn? Today yours pastors want to have good rels with members of their cong, be your Christian friends. Why? Your pastors love you; we want to sow seed of God's word among you, so that grows in you into strong faith! When pastors & members we have good, solid rels with each other, seed sowing happens very naturally. We want you to trust pastors, share joys, share sorrows, confess sins, receive forgiveness, hear gospel, have great confidence, even love – and not because best pastors in world (certainly pastors sinful, can sometimes offend flock; if we've ever offended you, we certainly apologize, repent). A&P had good rel with Paul, which made easier for them to hear gospel from him. So today, pastors & church members want have good rels, love one another as bro/sis in Christ, because strained rels get in way of seed sowing.
- Another observation. Vs. 4. Paul's MO for seed sowing; see all time in Acts: goes straight to synagogue, preaches gospel there. Why? There found gathered audience; there his garden; there planted seed in many hearts, at same time, in orderly way, to whomever gathered to hear gospel.
- Today, where people gather to hear gospel? At church! Place, garden where seed sown in many hearts, at same time, in orderly way is at church! So from this we learn importance of coming to church. Why you come church today? See friends? Make spouse/parents happy? Just your habit? Certainly good habit! But when we come church, this should be our attitude: "I want come church (need!) because this where seed of God's word is sown into my heart; not just in mine but in hearts of my fellow believers. I need this seed to keep faith strong. This seed is gospel of my Savior JC: who loved me so much that died on cross to forgive all my sins, rose from dead to save me from hell, bring me to eternal life with him in heaven. I want as much of this seed as can get! That's why I come to church!" When think like that, kind of makes skipping church, or finding excuses not to come, seem crazy, right? Vs. 4a. So let us, every Sun/Mon, come church to receive seed; and let's encrg those among us who maybe don't come as often, to come back church, so they too can receive seed.
- Vs. 5. That right there is power of seed: that JC is long awaited Messiah, whom God sent to be Savior of world. That's what Paul preached; but listen to reaction: vs. 6. In Paul's day, many people rejected gospel. That teaches us not to be surprised that in our day many will reject gospel. Ever hear people talk re church bubble, or kids in Christian school like ours in bubble? I think of our church/school like military garison in middle of violent war zone. There are spiritual enemies out there, want destroy faith. Jesus talked re birds eating seed. Skies around us filled with flocks of vultures, ready to

swoop down, snatch saving faith away from us, our children. Our church/school are sacred place where we can safely sow gospel seed; call that bubble if you want. But out there, the world hates gospel. So we should expect opposition, just like Paul did.

- However, gospel not always rejected. **Vs. 7-8.** This is seed falling on good soil, producing crop. Paul sowed seed; people believed; faith grew. Says many baptized. Baptism is seed sowing. When person is baptized, HS is planting, fertilizing, growing seed into faith all same time. Baptism & faith go hand in hand because baptism either starts or strengthens saving faith; powerful sowing of seed. Know what else powerful sowing of seed? Taking HC. When we receive HC, there again HS is planting, fertilizing, growing seed into faith. Reason we treasure the sacraments (bap, HC) because: not only gifts from God to us, but also they are gospel seed sowing. In his day Ap Paul preached, baptized, distributed HC. Today we do exactly same thing. Our services center around preaching of God's word, and receiving of sacraments, because that is gospel seed sowing.
- End of lesson says: **vs. 9-10.** So obviously God wants Paul (and us) to sow seed fearlessly, without hesitation. So what Paul do? **Vs. 11.** Implies not only did Paul teach, but also people came to learn. Only reason lasted for year and half: Paul left to preach/teach elsewhere. But I'm sure Corinthians continued to worship, study God's word faithfully after he left. What can we learn from that? Don't just come to church; come to Bible class, too. Bible class is seed sowing, too. In Bible class we discuss Bible teachings; we delve deeply into larger sections of God's word; we grow in our understanding of Bible. Your pastors wish more came to Bible class: whether Sun AM after Labor Day; Wed AM class; or Thurs early morning class; or any other classes offered. If been awhile, let me re-invite you: come to Bible class; study Bible with your pastors, just like Corinthians studied word with Paul.
- At end of his parable of sower/seed, Jesus says when person hears, understands word (when seed lands on good soil), this produces a crop. That crop is faith in Christ, and everything that comes along with faith: forgiveness of sins, peace in heart, comfort in sorrow, hope for future in heaven. That's what makes seed sowing so important! Grows faith in Christ! Seed sowing in Paul's day can teach us thing or two about seed sowing today. Having good rels with pastors, coming to church regularly, preparing yourself for opposition to gospel, treasuring word and sacraments, studying Bible – all these things were a fundamental part of seed sowing in Paul's day. May they continue to be the core of seed sowing among us today.

### **Acts 18:1-11**

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup> There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, <sup>3</sup> and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. <sup>4</sup> Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

<sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. <sup>6</sup> But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

<sup>7</sup> Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. <sup>8</sup> Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

<sup>9</sup> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." <sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.