

Pentecost 5A

July 13, 2014

Ken Wratten at St Stephen's, San Jose

Genesis 25:19-34 God provides grace through both Isaac and Esau

Romans 8:1-11 You are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 The Parable of the Sower / four Soils / the Seeds

Miracle Grow Spirituality

The parable of the Sower of seeds is really a lesson from Jesus about the condition of the soils that the seeds fall into. The seeds are his teachings about the Good News: which are teachings about the Grace of God. And the point of the story is that these important teachings about the Grace of God sometimes take root, and sometimes they do not. But in the end, Grace will multiply abundantly.

For the last couple of weeks we have looked at some of the signs of a life of Grace, and it is worth summarizing an even more complete list of those signs, so we can fully appreciate how important it is to pay attention to our own spiritual soil, so that the seeds of Grace can take root in us.

So let's look at the benefits of Grace:

We are...

Saved by grace Eph. 2:8-9 ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

Forgiven by grace Isa. 43:25 ²⁵"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.'

Sustained by grace Phil. 2:13 ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Healed by grace Ps. 147:3 ³He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Liberated by grace Mt. 11:28-30 ²⁸"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Given talents by grace Rom. 12:6 ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Used by grace Eph. 3:7 ⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

Kept safe by grace Jude 1:24 ²⁴To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

Transformed by grace Rom. 12:2 ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Matured by grace 2 Peter 3:18 ¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We can do things to provide good soil for God to work in; but not just by doing good things, because Grace is a free gift, and we cannot 'earn' it. But we CAN open ourselves to the gift. We can take steps to make our spiritual soil the spiritual equivalent of Miracle Grow potting soil. How can we become spiritual Miracle Grow?

Borrowing from Cursillo, we live the life of grace through three elements; Loyal reverence (piety) is the act of opening ourselves up to God; Choose to,

- Live in a state of continual prayer, keeping God close to us.
- Learn and practice contemplative prayer, without any agenda other than to be in God's presence, and being open to God's touch.
- Look for opportunities to bring people to Christ. (Different from bringing Christ to people... first be a friend.)
- Learn and practice honoring a Sabbath day, reserving sacred time for rest, being with our family, and making quiet time to reflect on our experiences of God in the past week.

Study is committing ourselves to continually grow; studying Scripture, and studying the lives of the saints; people who demonstrated strong spirituality; Francis of Assisi; Brother Lawrence. (Explain my study project.)

The third element of the life of grace is Action; but this is specific action; it is action to imitate Christ.

- We express a life of grace by acting in the ways that imitate Christ. Our actions toward others, including other believers, non-believers, and even our enemies, has to imitate Christ.
- Christian Action demands perseverance. It is in a healthy faith community – like this one – that we learn to be accountable, and we can help each other persevere through the difficult parts of this life of Grace.
- Action also involves participating in works of mercy for the sick, the shut-ins, the poor, and the homeless.

So there we have it; we have discovered the secret formula for Spiritual Miracle Grow. Each of us can help God's spiritual seeds to germinate and take root and grow tall and strong. It is God's seed; it is God's choice; it is God's Grace, and not based on our attempt to deserve it. But making ourselves open to the life of grace brings with it the power to transform us into a life filled with greater peace and a deeply rooted sense of purpose.

“But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Let it be so with you and with me. Amen.