

“The Power That Transforms Us” (Gospel Sanctification I)
(Study 7 of “Spiritual Processing Group: Sonship B” Series)

Scripture Passage (The Parables of the Sower and the Seed Growing)

English Standard Version Translation (ESV)~ Mark 4:1-9, 26-29

Again he [Jesus] began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” ⁹ And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” [...]

²⁶ And he [Jesus] said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

New Living Translation (NLT)~ Mark 4:3-9, 26-29

Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. ² He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: ³ “Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. ⁴ As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. ⁵ Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn’t have deep roots, it died. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” ⁹ Then he said, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.” [...]

²⁶ Jesus also said, “The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, while he’s asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. ²⁸ The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. ²⁹ And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come.”

Spiritual Exercise: Reading and Reflection

“What We Do Depends on What God Does” (Or, Christian Growth Is More Like Gardening Than an Assembly Line...)

Have you ever planted flowers or tomatoes? If you plant a seed in the ground, what will transform it into a plant? The answer is an outside source: the sun. Of course, if you just threw your seed into the backyard, you might get something, but probably only a scrawny plant at best. So although the sun is the source of energy, you still have to do your part. You till the ground, and fertilize it with Miracle-Gro; you water your plants, perhaps even cover them, and generally keep a close eye on them. Now the question arises: did you cause the growth of the tomato plants? No. You were not the outside source of power. You created a good environment for that growth. But without the sun, even the water you give to your plants will only cause them to rot. So, if you want lots of fruit, there is plenty for you to do. You have to participate in the process that will eventually produce quality fruit, but you are not the power source of that growth and transformation.

Relating this to how we change for the better, our power source is the Holy Spirit. He is the One who transforms our hearts. However, we still participate in that process. There are plenty of things for us to do: Bible Study, prayer, the Lord's Supper, fellowship, etc. But what we do does not make us better or produce holiness in us. Only the Spirit produces holiness; hence love," "joy," "peace," etc., are called the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Furthermore, suppose that you plant your tomatoes in the shade, or perhaps a big weed grows up and blocks the sun. There may be some growth, but not much. So, you need to make sure that nothing blocks the sun from your plants. In the Bible that is called "repentance." The weeds and clouds are our sin, which block out the sun (God's Spirit). Some sunlight will get through (on an ultraviolet level!) but not with full power. So, one of the attractive aspects of repentance is that it leads to a greater infusion of the Holy Spirit's power. But many of us deeply suspect God's love and ability to heal and forgive us do not run as deep as our sin. However, this is not the case: God's love and his ability are always infinitely greater than our sin. Jesus is "more full of grace than I of sin."

Group Prayer

Ideas for Communal and Personal Prayer

1. Reflection Question: *What's one thing you're processing about how God relates to you?*
 - (Is there a related question or comment that is sticking with you?)
 - Is there a praise, a confession, a word of thanks, or a request you'd like to make about what you're processing?
2. Is there something else going on that we can pray about for you?