"The Word in Action" – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 7
July 12, 2026

I. **Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23** – the Parable of the Sower

II. **It's sad to see the Christian faith** in decline in America and other places.

a. I will be the first to say that we've seen some resurgence in young people seeking the Truth, but for those of us who saw the Church in the 50s, 60s, and 70s – we are in a very different place today.
   i. Here at Ascension, we could have over 600 people attending worship between the two services, and over 200 kids in Sunday school.
   ii. Today we have about 120 worshiping with both services and a few kids in Sunday school.
   iii. I honestly can't figure out how they fit that many people in this church, but I guess with over 200 kids, they squished into the pews and made it work.

b. The Church as a whole is not decreasing – in North America and Europe Christianity is going down – but in places like Africa and parts of Asia, Christianity is growing in big numbers.
   i. I read that Africa has an estimated 600 million Christians… and because they spend a lot of time sharing the Word, they will probably have the largest population of Christians in the world by 2050.
   ii. Also, China has many Christians that are heavily persecuted – but if even 5% of their population is Christian, that's 70 million people.

c. At one time, America used to make church an important part of family life… it was almost a social and cultural standard to worship with the family.
   i. As time has gone by, we see many other options available to the average family, and church is one of many "activities" a family can choose.
   ii. We know and understand that church is not so much an activity or event that we choose, but it is God's Word and blessings to us as we give thanks for all we have from Him.
      1. Yet, many people see church as an activity that is almost like entertainment or something they come to if it makes them feel better.
      2. As time goes on, worship becomes stagnant and unfulfilling because the focus is not on God and His Word so much as how it fulfills the individual.
   iii. In a world of unlimited options that seek our attention, the Word of God and worship is not always a first choice… or a priority.

d. So, for example, we see many countries of Africa with limited options seeking their attention… growing in their Christian faith… and they sow the seed of the Word all around them so others will come to faith and produce fruit as well.

i. I don't know about you, but I struggle to focus on much of anything with the bright lights of the world constantly seek my attention – and the depth of my faith and trust in God grows at a slower pace.
ii. All of us who have faith in Jesus are the small percentage who came to faith, while the others had the devil, tribulation, or the cares of the world reject the Word… yet, we can still struggle with our growth even after the blessing of faith is given to us.

III. **Jesus tells one of His most well-known parables today**.

a. The Parable of the Sower is found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke… and Jesus explains its meaning to His disciples – which, unlike many other parables, gives us an explanation of what it means.
b. One of the parts that stands out to us right away (especially farmers) is the sower just indiscriminately tossing seed around.
   i. Farming is systematic… tilling the earth and preparing it in rows… placing seeds and covering them… watering and feeding and caring for the crop until it yields its fruit.
   ii. In this story the sower is just tossing seeds all over the place… and sometimes it is stolen away by the devil… sometimes a trial or persecution burns the sprout because it has no deep roots… or sometimes all the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches cause it to be choked.
   iii. In other words, the odds are low that someone actually comes to faith… and the feeling we get of watching the church decline… or the world rejecting Jesus is exactly what Jesus Himself experienced as He preached to the lost.
   iv. He scattered the Word everywhere, and yet just a small percentage became believers and produced fruit… and it's no different today.
c. Farmers spend a lot of money on seed, so they don't want to just toss it wherever… but the Word of God is of infinite value and should be thrown even in the most unlikely of places.
   i. The Word in action is beyond our comprehension, because it has the power to bring people from rejecting God to believing in Him and following Him into eternity.
   ii. When we think about resources and where to best spend them for the biggest return, God uses His own way and tells us that His Word will do what it needs to do – we just throw it all around.
d. In nature, some seeds can last a couple thousand years waiting to sprout, as the right conditions make it possible to bring forth a plant.
   i. In spreading the Word of God, it might be years before the seed sprouts into faith for a person, but we cannot know what will make the conditions right.
   ii. We are not to worry about the seed sprouting into faith as much as we should just spread the seed and let God do the rest.

iii. A faithful servant sows the seed and the Word in action will take care of its purpose.

e. Unfortunately, we struggle with two problems – one is that we don't joyfully sow the seed of the Word… but secondly, many of us allow the devil, trials, and the world to stunt our growth in Christ.

IV. **How powerful is God's Word**?

a. His Word in action created all things – including the world we tend to put on a pedestal above God!
b. His Word in action brought us to faith and sustains us in that faith.
c. His Word in action forgives us, even when we sin against Him constantly.
d. The Word of God has the power to create… to save… to forgive… and to transform in ways we cannot imagine.
e. So, when we know all these things about how powerful and wonderful His Word is, why do we keep it to ourselves?
    i. If we have a treasure that is beyond comprehension, why do we choose to hold it in rather than share it?
    ii. I know it's difficult, because Jesus tells us in the parable today that we won't see many people bear fruit… but we keep sharing anyway.
    iii. Not only that, but we share in unexpected places, because we believe the Word is able to bring forth faith in anyone.
f. For many of us who have faith, we struggle with the devil's temptations, the trials of life and criticism of our faith, and the cares of the world taking priority.
    i. All of the things that steal away the sprout of faith in unbelievers still plague us after we have this gift.
    ii. For some of us, the roots are shallow and we have little desire to know more about God and the depth of His Word.
    iii. Others allow the world and its many attractions to take them away from growing in their faith and life for God.
    iv. Many of us also neglect the foundation of our faith in Jesus, the Word itself.
        1. All of these attacks on our faith will come regardless, but as we are in the Word of God, committing to worship and communing regularly, and spending time with our Christian brothers and sisters… we are actively growing and producing fruit.
g. Remember, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ was the great example of the Word in action.
    i. As He was taken to the cross, He could have resisted, but He loved us so much that He had to take action for our lives.
    ii. With His death and resurrection, the sin that has us rejecting God is forgiven, and we are free to grow.
    iii. Jesus didn't just talk, He acted… and that is what God's Word in action is all about – the power to transform, forgive, and save.

h. We all have someone who sowed the Word in our lives, and by God's grace that Word has grown into a faith in Christ that will not be shaken.
    i. Praise God for His abundant grace… and His Word in action. Amen.