**SUNDAY 6/6/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 4:26-34**

Farmer Stephen and Farmer Peter had neighboring farms,

          but they did not get along with each other.

They constantly argued about everything –

          the best seed, the best fertilizer, how often to water, when to harvest.

No matter what Stephen did on his farm,

          Farmer Peter's harvest was always bigger and better.

Farmer Peter was much older than Stephen and he constantly criticized

          Stephen's farming ability.

One day Stephen had had enough.

He gathered seeds of invasive weeds.

One night, he scattered the seeds throughout the fields of Farmer Peter's farm.

From that time on Stephen gloated over the extra work he caused for Peter.

Time passed – as it always does –

          and Stephen fell in love with Peter's daughter, Amanda.

Against Peter's wishes, Amanda and Stephen were married.

When Farmer Peter died, Stephen and Amanda inherited Peter's farm.

As long as he was a farmer, Stephen wrestled with those weeds

          he planted so long ago.

He finally realized it had not been a good idea to plant those invasive seeds.

We harvest what we plant.

We will harvest distrust if we plant selfishness.

We will harvest loneliness if we plant pride.

We will harvest isolation if we plant greed.

If we plant trouble for our neighbor, we will eventually harvest more trouble.

But if we plant honesty, we will harvest trust.

If we plant humility, we will harvest friendship.

If we plant forgiveness, we will harvest reconciliation.

If we plant patience, we will harvest understanding.

Jesus used parables to teach us.

The stories he told contained great truths and insights about God and humans.

Early farmers did not use machines to plant, or sow their fields with seed.

They took handfuls of seed and, with a sweeping motion,

          scattered it on the ground they had plowed.

In his parables about farming, Jesus was not really teaching us to be farmers.

He was teaching us the difference between God's ways and human ways.

God wants us to scatter seeds abundantly,

          with great love, and patience, and understanding.

There is great power in seeds.

Seeds are often mysterious and mighty.

Often they will sprout and grow even in poor soil, without our care.

But when we pay attention, provide fertile soil and enough water,

          they produce even a better crop.

A Georgia farmer, ragged and barefooted,

          was standing on the steps of his tumbledown shack.

A stranger stopped for a drink of water, and just to pass the time of day he asked:     "How is your cotton coming along?"

"Ain't got none," replied the farmer.

"Did you plant any?" asked the stranger.

“Nope," was the reply, "afraid of bollweevils.”

“Well," continued the stranger, "how is your corn?”

“Didn't plant none," came the answer, " 'fraid there weren't going to be no rain.”

The visitor persevered: "Well, how are your potatoes?"

“Ain't got none. Scairt of potato bugs.”

“Really?" said the visitor. "Did you plant anything?”

"Nope," the farmer answered.

“Too much trouble, too many problems, afraid of too many things.”

With God, we don't have to be afraid of trouble or problems.

We can plant love in the lives of others, without worrying about the outcome.

We may never see the end results, but what we say and do will make a difference.

Jesus wasn't teaching us so much about farming,

          but about how to live as God's people.

He wants us to plant abundantly, to scatter the seeds God has given us.

The seeds we scatter among those around us determines

          how significant our lives are.

Do we really make a difference?

Can we really make a difference?

When we move - when we act - when we do something,

          we discover the universe really does notice.

We really do matter.

We really do make a difference.

In 1963 Edward Lorenz presented a hypothesis

          to the New York Academy of Science.

His theory, stated simply, was:

          A butterfly could flap its wings and set molecules of air in motion,

          which would move other molecules of air,

          in turn moving more molecules of air –

          eventually capable of starting a hurricane on the other side of the planet.

Lorenz and his ideas were literally laughed out of the conference.

What he had proposed was ridiculous.

It was preposterous.

But it was fascinating.

Therefore, because of the idea's charm and intrigue,

          the so-called "butterfly effect" became a staple of science fiction,

          remaining for decades a combination of myth and legend

          spread only by comic books and bad movies.

Imagine the scientific community's shock and surprise

          when more than thirty years after the possibility was introduced,

          physics professors working from colleges and universities worldwide

          came to the conclusion that the butterfly effect was actually

          authentic, accurate, and viable.

Science has finally accepted the butterfly effect acts upon all movement and action,

          including human actions and movement.

The very beating of our heart has meaning and purpose.

Our actions have value far greater than silver or gold.

Our lives, and what we do each day matters, forever.

Everything we do matters.

Every move we make, every action we take, makes a difference.

Everything we do affects life all around this planet.

Our life and what we do with it today, matters forever.

God created each of us to love and help our neighbors,

          to encourage and build one another up.

We have been created in order to make a difference.

God gave us the power to help change the world.

To make a real difference

          we need to scatter the seeds of love and forgiveness abundantly.

If we do not plant the seeds, the needed crops will not grow.

But if we plant the seeds, amazing things will happen.

The ones who are lonely, those who are lost and confused,

          those who do not believe they can go any further,

          suddenly discover we do care, and we will help, anyway we can.

What we do, and what we say, really does make a difference,

          in the lives of others, and in our own lives.

As we scatter the seeds of love, we can change the world.

And God makes sure we never run out of seeds.

Every day we are given more seeds

          to scatter among the lives of everyone we encounter.

AMEN