**“Bearing the Seed”** by S. Finlan, 2018 Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service, at First Church

**Psalm 126** 6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy.

**Matthew 6** 26Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. 27 Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? . . .”

This gospel passage is one of the most beautiful, and shows that Jesus loved the beauty of nature. And he makes you think. Really, how *can* worry add a single hour to your life?

But the sentence I find to be the most meaningful is the last one. It offers a principle for living: “Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:33). It is saying to make God and God’s ways *primary* in your life. If you get the *primary* thing right, the secondaries will follow.

How do we do this—with stern self-discipline and hyper-serious effort? Do we have to whip ourselves into shape, and then watch ourselves like a hawk? Or is Jesus trying to signal to us, through the serene language that he uses, that the path is made easier if we appreciate beauty? Maybe spiritual focus is *natural* and *normal*, if we appreciate the wonder and beauty that God presents to us. If we are *open* to God and to discovery, then spiritual progress is the natural result. And thanksgiving is the natural response. Can we help ourselves by worrying? Does it help us concentrate, or give us more energy? *No*. Then don’t worry! Don’t approach life with a joyless anxiety, but with a joyful appreciation. Spiritual fruits will result, just as physical fruits are the natural result of a healthy plant.

I see a similar point being made, also in beautiful language, in the Psalm: “Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves” (Ps 126:6). Carrying bunches of ripe grain plants.

And sometimes we *do* go into life weeping, because of heartbreak or tragedy that has struck, because of loneliness or injustice, or because we or someone we love has been misunderstood or mistreated. Weep for a season if you need to. These are *legitimate* tears; but then be ready to be surprised by joy, and by fruitfulness. Hang in there. Give it everything you’ve got, and ask for help, because God is willing. Make the transitions, though they may be difficult. Bear the seed for sowing, the seed that *will grow*. The seed is the promise of God’s spiritual care for us. We can be thankful for that promise.

And, usually when we least expect it, we find things working out, we find friends supporting us, we find meaningful work, and we go forth with shouts of joy, carrying our sheaves, the fruits of our labor, with us. Strive first for the will of God, and his guidance and love in your life, and many of the lesser things will fall into place.