

THE SOWER (Mt. 13:3)

Sow flowers, and flowers will blossom Around you wherever you go;
Sow weeds, and of weeds reap the harvest, You'll reap whatsoever you sow

*You'll reap whatsoever you sow (x2),
The harvest is certainly coming, You'll reap whatsoever you sow*

Sow blessings, and blessings will ripen, Sow hatred, and hatred will grow;
Sow mercy and reap sweet compassion, You'll reap whatsoever you sow

Sow love, and its sweetness uprising Shall fill all your heart with its glow;
Sow hope, and receive its fruition, You'll reap whatsoever you sow

In faith sow the word of the Master, A blessing He'll surely bestow;
And souls shine like stars for your crowning, You'll reap whatsoever you
sow

Preach Christ in His wonderful fullness, That all His salvation may know;
Reap life through the ages eternal, You'll reap whatsoever you sow

The Lord Jesus begins this parable with a simple introduction, **Behold, a sower went forth to sow** ... This was a sight so familiar to the multitudes as they gathered around Him on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (vv.1,2). And yet, this plain and straightforward statement, - **Behold, a sower went forth to sow**, - shows how He highlights those who serve in quiet little out-of-the-way places.

In a small local fellowship, we can often feel as if we are on the edges of a large field and the task of sowing the Gospel seeds is overwhelming. When we reflect upon how the 'the fields' around us over the years have been ploughed, and harvested, and re-ploughed, but today the ground spiritually is so hard it seems impossible for the seeds to enter the soil

with any hope of significant growth. It is similar to the message of Amos, **Amos 8:11** Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD

However, if the sower did not go into the field to sow, there *would* be no harvest, if there was no harvest, there would be no produce, and if there was no produce, there *would* be a famine. That is how it was in the time of Jesus. ... Today, it feels like we are in a spiritual pandemic of immense proportions. The sowing of the Gospel is confronted by a mass of weeds and thistles and thorns. Instead of healthy and mature spiritual food, people are preferring to feed on a harmful and destructive diet. Therefore, this statement from Jesus is tremendously relevant as He prepares His listeners to hear His message using the illustration of the sower and the seed.

Throughout the years, many tracts and invitations have been distributed, inviting the surrounding community to come and hear about the Lord Jesus. We know how important it is for without Christ they are heading towards a lost eternity, and that is why the sowing of the Gospel seed *is* an issue of life and death. ... Whether the world sees our message as a stumbling-block, or as downright foolishness, it is the only Gospel which eternally saves men and women, boys and girls from their sin ... and the Lord Jesus used the analogy of this sower who went out to sow ...

First of all, the sower's **IDENTITY**. We know nothing about him. There is nothing in his description we can draw from that tells us anymore, other than he was a sower. He was a *sower of seeds* and that is as much as we need to know about him. ... It does not matter who his mother was, or his father. It does not matter where he came from, or what kind of education he had, or what else he could do ... His **identity** is unimportant and secondary to the fact he was a 'sower'. ... He had lost **his identity**

in the work of the field, but he had also gained it in another way for he was set apart by Jesus as the sower of the seed.

I wonder how he sowed ... Did he walk up and down, or across, or diagonally? ... Did he use a refined method of sowing, or did he simply put his hand in the bag of seeds and distribute them freely? ... Does it matter? Either way, - refined or not, - the seed was sown on every inch of that field.

In Anstruther there is the little ‘close’, the end at which Thomas Chalmers was born. Chalmers was one of the founders of the Free Church. He was well-educated and very articulate, a professor of theology and a church leader ... and God used Him. ... Around the same time, God also used Billy Bray, the Cornish drunk who the Lord saved and turned into a preacher ... You would have had to listen hard to make out what he was saying in his broad West Country accent. ... Two men from opposite ends of the scale, and yet God blessed mightily how they both sowed from His Word.

The Billy Bray’s scatter in places the Thomas Chalmers’ do not get to, and vice versa, but it is the same Gospel seed for it is the same Lord upon which the harvest depends. You might think there’s not much you can do, - you have only got ‘a small hand’ ... well, even a small hand can sow much seed.

... And you don’t need fancy words or clever methods, there is nothing lavish about how Jesus introduced this sower, *Behold, a sower went forth to sow*. *That* is what a sower does! That’s what every decent sower on the hills and fields of Galilee did! Jesus often saw them sowing, as did the people in the crowds. ... And also, how was the sower dressed? It does not tell you. Was he a tall man or small? Was he old, or was he young? What was his name? We are not told that either. ... It doesn’t tell us for

we don't need to know. Jesus simply says, *Behold, a sower went forth to sow.*

There is something we *do* know about this man though. It was worth his while going out to sow because he knew the fruit that would grow from those seeds would be appetising and full of flavour. How did he know? He knew because he had previously tasted the fruit from which these seeds had come. It is as the psalmist wrote, **Ps. 119:103** How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! He went out sowing the seed knowing how good its fruit produced, and he wanted others to taste it too. ... Isn't that the essence of why Christians share the Gospel, because we have tasted and enjoy it, and we want others to taste it too.

Something else ... his bag of seed would not have lasted the whole field. He would have had to return time and again into the storehouse to fill up. One bag would not have done the whole field, and so the sower often went back to the place of supply. He went into the barn where he knew he would find all the supply he needed for each day. ... It is like how the Christian cannot function properly without returning to the 'storehouse' for a fresh 'filling up' with regular prayer and Bible study. ... This man *was* a sower, and we don't know much else about him ... but we know he was a sower, - that was **His Identity**.

HIS ACTIVITY Jesus made it very clear the direction the man took, this sower *went forth*. He did not lie in bed all day or wait until he *felt* like going out into the field, or hesitated to see if someone else was going out, but being a sower of seed, he knew what he had to do, i.e. to go out to sow seed. It wasn't complicated, but he had to get out and do it! ... He wasn't 'hanging round' the gate, holding back from getting into the work. He did not sit and think about it or go and talk to someone, but he *went forth*. ...

He was not a worker *theoretically*, or as he sat on his chair at home thinking about it, but he was a worker *practically*! Some people can tell you how the job needs to be done, but you never actually see them doing it! Solomon wrote, **Prov. 19:15** Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. The idle don't sow! They would rather scavenge from someone else who *is* sowing! ... They tell you they don't have the time, but really, they can't be bothered! They will not 'fill up their sack' and go out into the field to cast the Gospel seed! ... How can they claim to be fit for the Kingdom of Heaven (Lk. 9:62)?!

This sower was active. The seed had to be spread on the ground if there was to be a harvest, - *no sowing, no mowing*, - so he got himself up and went out to the field. If it was raining, or if there was a drizzle ... he was there anyway. If the sun was beating down ... he was there. Sowing the seed was his purpose ... and the more he did it the better sower he became for he got to know where best to cast the seed. Some seed here, some there ... sprinkled on ground he knew would have the best prospects to sprout.

He was up to the task and he was taking it seriously. It was not a game or something he did in his spare time ... People depended on how he sowed! They would be waiting for his produce in the market, and his family relied on it. Similarly, in the Lord's work, sowing the seeds of the Gospel is not an idle business for what we are sowing, the unsaved needs to receive, and future generations also need to receive. ... What we are sowing is the very best. We want to share it because we ourselves have tasted of it and we know how good it is ... The sower knew what he was doing, and he loved doing it ... The sower's **identity**, the sower's **activity** ... Finally ...

HIS TERRITORY He went into an open field which had already been prepared for the seed to be sown. As best he could, he had carefully made ready the soil on the land for which he was responsible. ... Spiritually, the same preparations are to be made, otherwise the seed is wasted. ... How do you know where to sow? ... That is where prayer and the leading of the Lord is required for sometimes you are called to sow the Gospel seed in places you would never think of and to people you would never have considered.

Before you sow the seed, the Lord sees to it the ground is prepared. The ground is not to be hard, or overgrown with weeds, or among stones ... for the seed to enter the soil, the Lord prepares it. Otherwise, it won't grow. Strange as it might sound, there are places He chooses *not* to prepare ... and there is no point sowing on unprepared ground ... for instance, when Paul was planning to evangelise along the southern coast of the Black Sea, towards Bithynia (Acts 16:7), the Holy Spirit prevented him and directed him elsewhere, across the Bosphorus, and into Europe ... Unchartered territory, but God had not been preparing Bithynia for the Gospel at that time. ... There was another occasion when He *did* for Peter records there was later established a Christian church there (I Peter 1:1). But initially, God was preparing the ground for the Gospel to enter Europe.

And when the Lord prepares the field, that is when we claim it as His territory and sow like we have never sown before! Indeed, again, this sower did not keep the seed to himself, and neither was he slack in his work. ... The Gospel news is to be scattered ... it is up to the Holy Spirit where He blows it ... but we have to scatter it, - that is our duty. ... The sower was sowing the seed, and that was his purpose.

CONCLUSION The sower's **identity**, the sower's **activity**, the sower's **territory** ... It is a simple parable teaching us our responsibilities

in concerning the spreading of the Gospel. ... When do we stop sowing the seed? There *is* a time when we shall stop and that is when the Lord comes again. In His calendar, He has it written in as the harvest, the ingathering of the grain. Some will be delivered into the barn, but some will be destroyed in the fire.

In the world's casual carelessness, the thorns and the thistles are presently outgrowing much of the good seed. Satan knows his time is short and he is frantically spreading every vile seed of deceit he can in an attempt to corrupt the good soil. He is saturating it with every filth he can produce. Not only has he contaminated the world, but he is also engaged in trying to adulterate, pervert, and distort the holy things of God. ... Until the Lord returns, we must not allow the weeds and the thorns and the thistles to blow in and sprout for they *will* smother, and cover, and harm our witness and work for the Lord. They will hinder the growing of the good seeds of the Word of God.

So, make sure the pouch is never empty. Make sure it is full of the good seed. Prepare it prayerfully from the abundance of God's provision and sow it confidently. Look upwards for the *Son* to shine, and for the showers of blessing ... and be confident for the signs God is working.

Behold, a sower went forth to sow ... A simple parable with profound truths. May the Lord be pleased to see us going **forth to sow ...** and that we would be privileged by being blessed with the fruit of our labour! For God's glory, Amen.