

The Wasteful Farmer Matthew 13:1–9

Good morning, everyone.

A few years ago, a good friend of mine named Mark decided to mentor a teenager in his neighborhood named Justin. Justin was a kid who had been dealt a really tough hand in life. He was angry, he was constantly getting suspended from school, and his language could strip paint off a wall.

Every single week, Mark would invite Justin out to lunch. He would show up at Justin's house, pick him up, take him out for a burger, listen to him vent, and try to share some wisdom and faith with him.

I watched Mark do this for a solid year. And from the outside looking in, it looked like a total disaster. Justin would routinely stand Mark up. When he *did* show up, he would spend half the time staring at his phone, swearing, or actively making fun of Mark's faith.

One afternoon, I sat down with Mark and, out of pure pragmatism, I told him, Man, I love your heart, but you are throwing your time away. Justin doesn't care. He's hard-hearted, he's unreceptive, and you are just wasting your energy. Why don't you invest your time in a kid who actually wants to learn?

Mark looked at me with this incredibly calm, deeply convincing expression, and he said, I hear you. And on paper, you're right. It looks like a waste. But I'm not playing the short game. I'm just going to keep throwing the seed of God's love into his life, because I don't get to decide when the soil softens up. My job isn't to calculate the return on investment; my job is just to be generous.

I walked away from that conversation feeling deeply rebuked—because I realized my heart was full of calculation, while Mark's heart was full of the gospel.

When we read Jesus' famous Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, we almost always put all of our focus on the four different types of soil. We focus on the hard path, the rocks, the thorns, and the good ground. But today, I want us to lift our eyes from the dirt and look at the behavior of the Farmer.

Because if you look closely at how this Sower operates, you will realize that by any modern economic standard, this Farmer is completely out of His mind. He is wildly, beautifully, and scandalously wasteful.

The Economics of the Kingdom

Let's look back at verses 3 and 4: A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path...

Now, if you were a first-century Palestinian farmer, seed was your most valuable commodity. It wasn't cheap, and it represented your family's survival for the next year. Because of that, standard farming logic dictated that you were incredibly precise. You would walk through your plowed, prepared rows of good soil, and you would carefully drop the seed exactly where it had the best chance of growing. You guarded that seed with your life.

But look at the Sower in Jesus' story. He doesn't look at the field with precision; He looks at it with prodigal extravagance.

He grabs giant handfuls of precious seed, and He just flings it everywhere. He throws it right onto the hard-packed, concrete dirt path where the birds are already circling. He throws it directly onto the shallow rocky ledges where he *knows* the soil is only an inch deep. He throws it right into the middle of the briar patches and the thorn bushes.

If this were a modern business meeting, the agricultural consultants would stand up, point to a chart, and say, Sir, your efficiency rating is terrible. You are wasting seventy-five percent of your inventory on unviable territory. You need to restrict your distribution.

But the Sower doesn't stop. He just keeps throwing.

When Jesus explains this parable, He tells us that the Sower is God, and the seed is the Word of His Kingdom—His grace, His love, His truth. And the radical message of this text is that God does not budget His grace.

God doesn't sit in heaven evaluating us, saying, Well, that person looks like an eighty percent success rate, so I'll give them my love. But that person over there looks like hard concrete, so I won't waste my breath on them. No. Our God is a lavish, extravagant Sower who pours out His mercy on the broken, the cynical, the shallow, and the crowded, flinging His love to the absolute ends of the earth.

The Mercy of the "Waste"

Why does God sow this way? Why waste seed on a hard heart or a thorny life?

He does it because God sees potential where the world only sees a problem.

Think about the Apostle Paul before he came to Christ. His name was Saul. He was a religious extremist who was actively arresting and executing Christians. If the disciples had been managing the "seed distribution," they would have looked at Saul and said, **"Hard path. Total concrete. Don't waste a single prayer on him."**

But the heavenly Sower looked at Saul on the road to Damascus and threw a massive handful of grace right at him. And that hard concrete cracked open, and out of it grew the greatest missionary the world has ever seen.

Think about your own life. Think about the seasons where you were running away from God, or when your life was completely choked out by greed, anxiety, or addiction. If God were an efficient, calculating investor, He would have cut His losses with you a long time ago.

But He didn't. He kept pouring out His grace on you when you were shallow. He kept extending His mercy to you when you were completely distracted by the worries of this life. You are sitting in this room today not because you were perfect soil, but because you have a relentlessly stubborn Sower who refused to stop throwing seed at your heart until it finally took root.

Becoming Wasteful Sowers

Church, this realization should completely transform the way we look at the people around us.

If we are followers of Jesus, we are called to imitate the Sower. We are called to be the ones scattering the love of God in our families, our workplaces, and our neighborhoods. But if we aren't careful, we will start acting like agricultural accountants instead of kingdom farmers.

We look at a family member who has rejected the gospel for twenty years, and we stop praying for them because we think, *It's a waste of breath.

We look at a coworker who is abrasive or cynical, and we stay silent because we think, They'll just mock me.

We look at a broken, messy neighborhood in our city, and we withhold our resources because we think, *The return on investment isn't high enough.

But Jesus blows that entire corporate mindset out of the water. He says: Throw the seed anyway.

* Love the person who doesn't love you back.

* Serve the coworker who will never thank you.

* Share your faith with the neighbor who seems completely uninterested.

* Pour out your life for the broken and the marginalized, even if it looks like a complete waste of time to the rest of the world.

Because here is the secret of the kingdom: You and I cannot see what is happening beneath the surface. You don't know when a crisis is going to break up that hard path. You don't know when a moment of loneliness is going to cause someone to start digging up the rocks in their life. Our job is not to predict the harvest; our job is just to make sure the seed keeps falling.

The Miracle in the Soil

Remember my friend Mark and the teenager, Justin?

About three years after that conversation I had with Mark, Justin hit rock bottom. He was arrested, he found himself sitting in a juvenile detention cell in the middle of the night, completely alone, terrified, and staring at the blank walls.

And do you know what happened? In the quiet of that dark cell, the hard path cracked. And all of those words, all of those lunches, all of those simple phrases of grace that Mark had been "wasting" on him for years—seeds that had been sitting dormant under the dirt—suddenly began to shoot up.

Justin remembered that there was a man who loved him because Jesus loved him. He picked up the phone, called Mark, and that night, Justin surrendered his life to Christ. Today, Justin is a grown man, a husband, a father, and a leader in his local church.

What looked like a waste to me was a miracle waiting to happen to God.

Stop calculating your love. Stop budgeting your grace. Step out into the fields of your life this week with your pockets full of the seed of the gospel, and fling it wide. Be ridiculously, beautifully, and scandalously generous with the grace you've been given. Because we serve a God who promises that when His Word goes out, it never returns void—and a harvest is coming that will make every single seed worth it.

Amen.