

The Careless Farmer

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By Lenny Cacchio

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—What kind of farmer would throw seed in places where there is little chance for growth?

One time Jesus told a parable about just such a man. We know it as the Parable of the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20 and Luke 8:4-15).

In this parable the farmer throws seed almost indiscriminately. Some falls on good ground and flourishes, but some also falls on stony ground where the seeds sprout but have no depth for their roots.

Some falls on ground full of thorns and weeds where shortly after sprouting it gets choked off, while some falls by the wayside and is gobbled up by fowl and other fauna and otherwise trampled underfoot by passersby.

Would a prudent farmer sow seed in such a way, where much of it would be wasted and lost?

Would he even think about doing this deliberately?

What kind of sower is this?

Mark's Gospel tells us that the "sower is the one who sows the word." That could be Jesus Himself, but the wording does not exclude anyone else who is spreading the good news.

What if the ground appears to be poor ground for the gospel?

Is the parable teaching us that we should sow the seeds there anyway?

Maybe part of the answer can be found in the parable that immediately follows the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:24-29).

Sometimes known as the Parable of the Tares, it reminds us that bad seed can get mixed in with the good, resulting in a mixture of good crop and weed crop.

The parable reminds me about something that happened during my early days of backyard gardening. I noticed midspring a rather odd-looking plant growing where I didn't think it should be. I had planted potatoes in one corner of the garden and they had begun to sprout.

There was this odd plant in an odd place that I thought maybe was a potato plant. But it didn't look like the other plants, and it was in the wrong place.

After a few weeks I couldn't take it anymore and decided to pull the rogue plant out of my well-groomed garden—at which time I realized my mistake.

Dangling from the roots was a small, immature potato. This plant was not a rogue weed. It was a different variety of potato.

It might have looked different and maybe wasn't growing where I thought it should be, but it was absolutely a good, healthy plant that should have been allowed to mature.

The Parable of the Tares came to mind. I learned that in matters of the spirit we often lack the judgment to know the difference between tares and wheat, weeds and good crops. Sometimes it's best just to let them grow together to avoid hurting the healthy plants.

This seems to be an extension of the lesson found in the Parable of the Sower.

- In the Parable of the Sower, we seem to be told not to prejudge the receptiveness of the soil to the gospel.
- In the Parable of the Tares, we are told to be careful about weeding out what appear to be tares.
- In other words, our job is to sow the seed in hope and tend the field in compassion.
- But at the same time be aware that failure for good seed to take root and for tares among the wheat will always be a given.