

SERMON
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Called to BE the Church (Part 3): “Our Hearts Go Out”

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2 Corinthians 9:10-15

Jesus once told the story like this:

“A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. ⁷ Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸ Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” (Luke 8:5-8)

Scattering seed is generous. It isn't meager and sparing. I am sure that any farmer here can tell you that. You know when you scatter or plant seeds, that not all of them will grow. But that's okay, because that's what happens when you scatter seeds. You know that some will get eaten by birds, or some will get shrivelled by the sun. You can not always control the outcome of every seed. But that's OK. That is why farmers plant an abundance of seed. They know that when the seed hits the good soil, that's where the generosity of seed really takes – it roots, it begins to sprout, then it produces a crop. Maybe one that you couldn't even predict. Maybe one that you couldn't even imagine. One that scripture tells us produces “a hundredfold” of what was sown.

It is the same when we are generous with the seeds that we plant by sharing our time, our talents, and our treasures. In our church life, we can not always predict the amazing results that living our mission has had:

- When we work in the kitchen at a Seniors Luncheon – we touch the lives of those that come to share in the hospitality that we create.
- When we help people learn to cook at Lunch N' Learn – we share fellowship over the pots and pans, stirring, chopping and grating.
- When we organize activities on PD days, at LOL youth, or with Messy Church – we are providing a safe space for our young people to have fun, reflect, and learn that God loves them.
- When the men's breakfast group meets once a month – they are providing companionship that goes well beyond a cup of coffee.
- When we enjoy Munchies for Mission after church – we have just seen all the amazing results of our giving, and how it supports Mission and Service with the United Church partners.
- And when give to our treasures to the ongoing costs of own church - we are helping to provide a sacred community space. A space that offers so much, for so many, in such different ways.

Consider all of these, and more as seeds that are being planted. Seeds of your generosity.

Wow!

There are so many wows aren't there? Sometimes we don't realize the harvest that we have sown. Sometimes we don't realize how our offerings of our time, talents, and treasures have touched the lives of others.

In the scripture we read today, we hear Paul telling the Corinthians:

“Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God” (2 Corinthians 9:13)

That is so true – and it’s a reason to celebrate. Because of all that you do here as a congregation, and because of all the ways that you give to Knox, others can praise God.

And Paul goes onto say:

“their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.” (v14)

“Their hearts will go out”. In our church life as well as our personal one, we don’t always know the hearts we touch. In the church, we live out our call to discipleship, confident that when our seeds land on good soil that there will be a harvest, and yet sometimes we aren’t even aware of the good we do, or the deepest meaning of our work.

Those of you who help with our property, for example: shoveling snow, maintaining the boiler, fixing the sound system – you aren’t just helping keep things in working condition. You are actually maintaining someone’s sacred space; the space where they pour out their deepest longings to God; the space where they forge some of their most caring relationships.

My point is that the seeds we plant through the work of the church - the seeds that we plant through our offerings -produce harvests beyond our imagining. Throughout our church, our community and our world, there are harvests and there are crops, some that we see and ones we don’t.

At the end of Paul’s appeal in 2 Corinthians, after he’s talked about how God will increase our store of seed and enlarge our harvests, and how we ourselves will be enriched through our generosity, he ends by giving thanks God for God’s “indefinable gift.”

Indefinable gift.

This term is found only in this passage, and only once outside the New Testament. It describes something that is beyond our capacity to understand. Something that is beyond words. Something that is ineffable.

The seeds you and I plant are an indefinable gift. A holy gift. A gift whose impact we cannot always fathom. A gift that enriches us the more we give.

I thank you all for your gifts of time, talent, and treasure – for the seeds that you scatter so generously.

Thank you for the obvious work that you do, and for the quiet deeds that don’t draw a lot of attention.

Thank you for responding to our stewardship campaign with generosity.

Thank you for making a commitment to the future of Knox.

Thank you. All of your efforts contribute to a good harvest in a world that so deeply needs it. My heart goes out to you.

Knox church is grateful for you. We are blessed to have you. We are blessed to have each other on this road of life. May God continue to bless us —our giving and our receiving— on this wondrous journey of life and continue to bless the world through us.

Amen.

Before we take a time of celebration at Jesus’ table, let us take a moment of meditation to reflect on all the seeds that we have sown, and the harvest that we have been blessed with.