

Newsletter Reflections for May

As I begin thinking about the coming month of May an old folk saying or rhyme came to mind: April showers bring May flowers. There are many clip art images that show it is a popular concept. Perhaps it has been on my mind because this spring, including April has been so full of showers. And even if May hasn't quite arrived as I write this, the weather has been warm and the spring flowers have been beautiful. Spring always brings with it thoughts of planting things; of watching things grow and bloom. It is just part of a seasonal cycle which is deeply rooted not only in nature, but in the rhythm of our lives. We find it in our literature and in our culture. We find it in the advertisements presented by TV and other media that are designed to lure us into stores so we purchase items; so we plant gardens and flowers. Even if the ads these days show us plants already blooming or about to bear fruit rather than seeds, we are urged to participate in this springtime ritual of planting. But it is this concept of planting seeds that I find myself coming back to consider, especially in light of the news headlines of our times. And Biblically speaking, within scripture the narrative reveals God often speaks of planting and tending as a metaphor of the relationship with humanity. God often refers to Israel as a vineyard; one often which has not grown as it should. One of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of God speaks of the sower of seeds who scatters seeds that fall in various types of soil and their fate. There is another parable about a field where as the seeds sprout it is seen that two types of seeds have been sown. Those are metaphors from our scriptures which seem to have a particular relevance for today's world and us. The reason I think these metaphors are ones we should be thinking about now is because of a current non-scriptural phrase which is an "opt-out" of blame phrase currently making the rounds. There is this phrase which seems to be popular now—it speaks of the "unintended consequences" of actions which seems to imply that the consequences just happened. There is a fundamental law of physics—not high level physics, but very basic high school physics which is easy to demonstrate. This law states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. If you think about that, then there cannot really ever be any "unintended consequences", just ones not considered carefully. Whatever action is done, is going to cause other actions—just like when you throw a stone into a pond of water, there are ripples which radiate outward. What people usually mean by "unintended consequences" are just consequences that occurred someone thought would not affect them or "come home to roast" as my father would have said. Where am I going with this? What connection is there between the "unintended consequences" of our policy makers and the illustration about the kingdom of God used by Jesus about sowing seeds? Jesus calls us to be a witness to the message he brought that God loves us. Therefore, each of us, every single one of us, has the capacity to sow seeds as we go about our daily lives as we interact with others. And if we follow the new commandment given by Jesus we are to show that we love as we are loved. Every word we say of kindness, of understanding, of concern is an opportunity to plant a seed of caring. Every opportunity that we hoard such a word unspoken leaves a hole where

another type of seed may fall. Because not all seeds that are scattered are those which will grow into desirable plants and those seeds grow as well. As I look at the news stories today, my observation is that we are not doing a very good job of planting our seeds of love and caring. Somehow those who are to be known by their love as disciples, as witnesses to the love of God are not planting or broadcasting our seeds as the sower in the parable would have us do. Someone is doing a good job of planting seeds of hate, of distrust, of envy, of fear and those seeds are being watered and nourished. They are growing rapidly and well. As we begin the month of May, we are still in the season of Easter. We have just found the empty tomb and have been given the wonderful, glorious news that God's love has won and redeemed us. With this news our hearts and our seed pouches should be overflowing. It is true that not all the seed that the sower scattered fell on rich soil, but that should not prevent us from trying to plant our seed of good news. And wherever we find that a "good seed" has been planted, we should do our best to nourish it by adding our words of kindness and caring.

Shalom,

Pastor Libby