

July 15-21, 2018

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Sunday, July 15, 2018

## Stewards

### Genesis 1:11-12 TLB

*And he said, "Let the earth burst forth with every sort of grass and seed-bearing plant, and fruit trees with seeds inside the fruit, so that these seeds will produce the kinds of plants and fruits they came from." And so it was, and God was pleased.*

### Genesis 1:28-31 TLB

*28 And God blessed them and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; you are masters of the fish and birds and all the animals. 29 And look! I have given you the seed-bearing plants throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. 30 And I've given all the grass and plants to the animals and birds for their food." 31 Then God looked over all that he had made, and it was excellent in every way. This ended the sixth day.*

*Does God want us to be vegetarians - physically or spiritually?*

Note that He made no blood-thirsty creatures. No fear of co-inhabitants of Mother Earth.

Greed is one of God's pet peeves! Greed develops in a blood-thirsty spirit.

Greed is an attitude that needs to be checked; a weed that needs to be removed and replaced.

As stewards of God's creation, we do not just remove weeds and then leave gaping holes where the weeds were. We tend to those areas, refilling the holes with fresh soil.

### Genesis 2:15 TLB

*The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden as its gardener, to tend and care for it.*

When I was in my 20s, I tried my hand at gardening,

But, did not enjoy the "burden of it" - constantly being hounded to weed, water, prune and just care for it. I developed an attitude of carelessness with regards to my garden.

I didn't NEED the harvest it would produce - since I was able to afford buying whatever harvest I might reap from my garden.

So, I let that go - and decided to pursue other, more enjoyable pastimes.

I was not ready to be a steward of any sort of garden.

I had no idea, at that time, it was just a matter of attitude that was causing me to miss out on tending to and caring for the many gifts our Creator has blessed us with.

Let us open our minds, our hearts and our hands - and journey together through our gardens this week, considering each opportunity to dig deeper into our own lives as we do in our gardens.

*As taught to us through the Great Law of the Iroquois:*

*In our every deliberation, let us consider the impact of our decisions on the next 7 generations.*

*Song suggestion for the day: **Praise and Thanksgiving, Albert F. Bayly (1970)***



**Monday, July 16, 2018**

## **Soil**

**Isaiah 61:11** - *For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.*

### **Ezekiel 17 Living Bible (TLB)**

*17 Then this message came to me from the Lord:*

*2 "Son of dust, give this riddle to the people of Israel:*

*3-4 "A great eagle with broad wings full of many-colored feathers came to Lebanon and plucked off the shoot at the top of the tallest cedar tree and carried it into a city filled with merchants. 5 There he planted it in fertile soil beside a broad river, where it would grow as quickly as a willow tree. 6 It took root and grew and became a low but spreading vine that turned toward the eagle and produced strong branches and luxuriant leaves. 7 But when another great, broad-winged, full-feathered eagle came along, this tree sent its roots and branches out toward him instead, 8 even though it was already in good soil with plenty of water to become a splendid vine, producing leaves and fruit." 9 The Lord God asks: "Shall I let this tree grow and prosper?"*

When I was in my 20s, I too was a bit whimsical, like the tree planted by the great eagle in Ezekiel 17. I pondered and pursued various pastimes - many of which were harmful to my health and my relationships - and alienating me from my Creator.

But, when I was in my 30s, I once again endeavored to grow a garden, and much to my surprise, it was and has become a very enriching, enlightening and enjoyable endeavor - soul fulfilling, actually.

Three of the most treasurable things I've found in this part of my gardening journey are: Encouragement, support and love ... Yes! these are a few of my favorite things ...

You see, the gardener who was guiding me when I was in my 30s was encouraging, supportive and loving. Not hounding me to "take care of my chores" - but suggesting ways to help the garden grow, celebrating gardening-joys with me, like: finding earthworms in the soil - aerating and preparing it for growing things. I came to love playing in the rich, fertile soil - which I have since dubbed the name "miracle soil". Working the soil is a key step to abundant harvests.

The same is true of our spiritual garden. What are some new ways we might freshen the soil within us? How can we become good soil that warmly accepts and provides nourishment to seeds that God plants within us?

*Creator God, all the world is a garden for Your creativity. Strengthen, develop and keep safe all who tend Your creation with loving care. Amen.*

Song suggestion for the day:

**Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil by Handt Hanson - 1985**



**Tuesday, July 17, 2018**

## **Seed**

### **Matthew 17:20**

*"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible for you!" –*

### **Luke 8:4-8**

*Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."*

### **James 3:18**

*And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

### **1 Peter 1:23**

*For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

As I began to learn about and appreciate growing a garden, I became amazed at the ability of a seed! Especially the seed that is planted in rich fertile soil.

I searched for and got excited over the seedlings that would sprout up!

I learned ways to help make room for the stronger seedlings to grow, by watering, weeding and pruning;

Creatively constructing and placing structures for vines to climb on - allowing them to breathe and become more bountiful; and allowing for easier access to their bounty.

These weren't "dreaded chores" for me anymore!

I viewed my garden with a whole different attitude!

Jesus knows the power of a seed. He often refers to seeds and soil in His parables.

He helps us understand God - in gardening. God is our Master Gardener.

God has planted imperishable seed within each of us. Jesus came to tend to and help strengthen God's seedlings. He has shown us how to develop and grow God's spiritual garden - yielding crops a hundred times more than what is sown!

*Holy God, maker of heaven and earth and all things within them, bless the seeds we plant and make us faithful stewards of Your abundant provisions. Amen.*

*Song suggestion for the day:*

**"Seed to Sow" by Michael W. Smith**



**Wednesday, July 18, 2018**

## **Sow Seeds on Good Soil**

### **Ecclesiastes 11:6**

*Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed.*

**Luke 8:4-18:** *"And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

### **2 Corinthians 9:6**

*Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

Sometimes, we sow absentmindedly - unaware of what we might be growing.

Sometimes, we put forth much effort in our sowing, but then leave things unattended awhile - and come back to find the soil has turned to dust, or the seedlings have wilted, or weeds have taken over.

How often do we begin our relationships with courting, going out of our way to get to know someone, putting forth much effort to sow a healthy relationship? Then, once the marriage has happened, we find that we have left that person unattended for a while, and come back to a dry, wilted, weedy mess.

Is there a person or pet or special area in your life that you may have absentmindedly left unattended? Who, or what, is God calling you to tend to today?

*Faithful Lord, let us learn from Your faithfulness and not let our hands be idle. Help us to sow bountifully in good soil and not grow weary in tending our gardens. Amen.*

*Song suggestion for the day:*

**Rose Garden - Lynn Anderson**



**Thursday, July 19, 2018**

**Saturate**

**1 Corinthians 3:6-7**

*I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.*

***Living water***

**John 4:4-26**

*"...but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."*

For the last few years, as I plant our herb gardens, our squash patch, which also host some veggies, flowers, and perennials - I have watched the clouds roll in and just hover north of my little spot in the world. Sometimes they close in enough to sprinkle and dampen - but it usually works out that I am able to get everything planted before the heavens open and release their overflow. As the rain pours down, I just stand there a little longer, to watch and listen to the thirsty earth soak in a nice long refreshing drink.

Then, all the plants, trees and bushes around my yard and gardens seem to say "thank you" for the refreshing rains, as they perk up, green up and lift their blooms to the sun that follows. They need the rain, as much as the sun.

They need the fertile soil, the tending, and the Love.

How often do I accept Jesus' invitation to drink of the water that He gives?

The water that springs up to eternal life is a gift to be grateful for. How do I show Jesus my gratitude?

*Loving God, pour Your love into our hearts to flow out to others' lives. Amen.*

*Song suggestion for the day:*

**I Need You Now by Matt Redman**



**Friday, July 20, 2018**

## **Sensitive**

### **Proverbs 27:18**

*Those who tend a fig tree will eat its fruit, and those who look after their master will be honored.*

### **Luke 13:6-9**

*And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"*

God is a God of second chances! Let us learn from Him.

As we tend our gardens, fruit trees and flowering bushes - we are all aware of the disappointment that comes from fruitless efforts.

Do we just give up?

No. We seek guidance, tend more, fertilize more ...

And yet, sometimes it becomes apparent that more efforts on our part are just not going to bring the fruit or blossoms on certain plants.

Sometimes we have to say enough of this - and try something different.

If you feel you're beating your head against a wall in your job, or ministry efforts, or in a relationship that's draining rather than encouraging, supportive and loving, take a moment to join God in the Garden, and ask for His guidance.

*Dear Lord, help me to be sensitive  
and caring as I serve others.  
Help me to love others tenderly as You  
so tenderly love and care for me.  
Amen.*

Song suggestion for the day:

**In the Garden - Alan Jackson**



**Saturday, July 21, 2018**

## **Sharing**

After working our gardens over this past week, we are ready to **Share** the harvest:

### **Psalm 85:12 Land Producing**

*Indeed, the LORD will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce.*

***The harvest is ready ...***

**John 4:35-38**

*"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.'*

The abundant harvests that our gardens produce are often too much for us in our home. My gardener-guide taught me years ago to fill up a wheelbarrow with much of our excess, and set it near the road in front of our home - with a sign "free for all"

People are welcomed, and they share their gratitude.

What had been a burden to me in my 20s has become something I look forward to as I age. Each year now, I seek out something new or different to grow and tend to it with eager anticipation of the harvest it will yield.

Is your "garden" a chore? Or an opportunity to grow? An opportunity to share?  
Are you bearing fruit for the Lord with generous hearts? Or do you feel burdened?

### ***The Fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:22***

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*

Where can I sow love today?

With whom shall I share joy?

How do I bring peace to the world?

In my walks with others, do they witness patience from within me?

Is there a kinder thing I could do right now?  
How shall I share God's goodness with others?  
Will I leave a legacy of faithfulness?  
Who could benefit from some gentleness today?  
What, in my life, is lacking self-control?  
Can I help to bring a law breaker back into God's fold - with these fruits?

*God, we thank you for the fruits that make up our spirits. Help us to develop each fruit and explore how best to use what you have gifted us with, to do the work that you have sent us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

*Song suggestion for the day: **Here's to the Farmer by Luke Bryan***

