

i dream of reconnect... reproducing

Reconnect – October 25, 2009

Text: Matthew 13:1-9, 16-23; I Corinthians 3:5-7

Key Thought: It's natural, with God's help, for us to ultimately reproduce the new life that He gives us, in spite of many obstacles.

Later that same day, Jesus left the house and went down to the shore, where an immense crowd soon gathered. He got into a boat, where he sat and taught as the people listened on the shore. He told many stories such as this one: "A farmer went out to plant some seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The plants sprang up quickly, but they soon wilted beneath the hot sun and died because the roots had no nourishment in the shallow soil. Other seeds fell among thorns that shot up and choked out the tender blades. But some seeds fell on fertile soil and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted. Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!" Matt. 13:1-9. NLT

Pre-Intro: House S06E05 part 2 [video]

- Kids, eh! I saw a little story this week:

It was 6 p.m., and I was about to leave the coin laundry where I was employed. My boss called me over and asked if I would mind dropping off someone's laundry on my way home. "It's for my cousin," she apologized, "who's eight months pregnant and can't get out much anymore."

I cheerfully agreed and, driving to the address, knocked at the door. A little girl, the sister-to-be, answered.

"Hi, there," I said with a big smile. "Is your mommy home?" Holding up the white bundle of clothes, I explained, "I have a delivery for her."

The child's mouth dropped, and her eyes went wide. "Mom!" She shrieked, "come quick! It's the stork!"

Intro: Baby boom at Reconnect

- Speaking of the stork, we've been having a baby boom here at Reconnect – how many babies now? And how many girls in a row?
- In about 15 years or so, our church will be extremely popular with teenage guys, and our mandates will focus on fear and intimidation techniques ;)
- Of all our values, if there's ANY value that we're living out, it would seem to be the one we're looking at this morning – "reproducing"
- But when we use that word as a value, we're talking about more than biology – we're talking about a passing on of spiritual life, a life that God gives us as we embrace Him in our lives

Read Text: Matthew 13:1-9, 16-23

- Jesus told a story one day to a large crowd about that very process – and he later explained that story, privately, to a group of his closest followers – we're going to take a closer look at that story today
- Traditionally it was called the parable of the sower – but today many people call it the parable of the four soils – listen and see if you can figure out why:

See, there was a farmer who went out to sow seeds...

Some fell on the road... and the birds devoured them.

And some fell among the rocks and immediately sprang up...

but withered in the sun, because there was no depth of soil.

And some fell among the weeds... and were choked out.

But some of the seed fell upon good soil... and it yielded fruit...

one thirty, but another sixty, and another a hundred.

Let those who have ears to hear – listen.

- It's not a long story, and it's not difficult to understand, at least on the surface – a Palestinian farmer, using first century techniques, goes out to plant their crop, and sows the seed by hand
- The seed falls on various parts of the field and grows differently, based on the soil it encounters
- Ultimately, even though some of the seed is lost, and some withers, and some is choked out, there is a good crop that is harvested, because of the good soil that some of the seed fell on
- But Jesus tells the story to get people thinking – thinking about how the story relates to a life with God – and He's looking for them to be chewing on it in their minds, to be wanting more, to be trying to understand it
- He goes on to teach many other things by the beach that day, but this story sticks with his closest followers and friends, the group called the disciples – and they ask him about it later, privately, for him to explain it to them in detail
- So, he does – here's what he says: the parable is a series of snapshots of people and their reactions to the Good News of Jesus' message

... Now here is the explanation of the story I told about the farmer sowing grain: The seed that fell on the hard path represents those who hear the Good News about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches the seed away from their hearts.

- The ironic thing about hearing about the four different responses to the message of God's love is that you can see yourself at different points in your life – as well as people that you know
- The first sort of person is someone who just isn't ready – it's not the right time – they're not looking, they're not interested – and it passes them right by
- The message, the idea lands, but it's never really planted – more work is needed
- And God is faithful to do that – there will be another time when they are more ready

The rocky soil represents those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but they wilt as soon as they have problems or are persecuted because they believe the word.

- The next "type" is a roller coaster ride – because initially, the message of God's truth and love seems like the answer to everything – hence the joy
- But then life invades, and things get difficult – something happens, or they experience a setback – and the seed wilts

The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lure of wealth, so no crop is produced.

- For the third group, there is growth and the potential of a harvest – but again, life gets in the way – in Luke’s biography Jesus is quoted as talking about “worries, riches and pleasures” – the things that get in our way and threaten to continually distract us
- Fantasy worlds at our fingertips – we have more time for more distractions than ever before – there are the distractions we choose – our pleasures and desire for more, more, more – and then there are the distractions that come our way, our problems – our health, our finances, other people, you name it
- And part of everyone’s life is to deal with these things – they never go away – but they seem to gain a life of their own when they become the focus of your life – when you just can’t seem to escape them OR you give yourself over to them
- And when a person does that, the life they have inside them – the new, spiritual life that God has placed in them – gets choked out and dies – or stays in constant competition, and is rendered useless for anything more than one voice among many, continually

The good soil represents the hearts of those who truly accept God’s message and produce a huge harvest – thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted.”

- Results: 30, 60, 100 fold – great yields for a crop – impact on people, and how you being to sow “seed” yourself – that’s the idea of “harvest” – you are the harvest, and then God’s word in you becomes the seed, and the cycle of sowing and reaping continues down through lifetime after lifetime
- The “harvest” is the life of God spreading to other people – from you to them, from them to others, and so it goes – the way that following Jesus has come down to us, through history, across geography, and people groups, and the way it continues to jump barriers of language, custom and opposition even this morning, all around the world
- Robert Gundry (Garland 164) the difference between the good earth, the good soil, is that it gets everything right that leads the rest of the soils astray – “The good hearer welcomes the word immediately so that it cannot be snatched away by Satan. The good hearer welcomes it deeply so that it is not withered by persecution. The good hearer welcomes it exclusively so that other concerns do not strangle it. As the seed fails in three different ways in the bad soils, it succeeds in three different ways in good soil...” (Garland Mark 164)

Reproduction: natural or under attack?

- For something that seems to many people to be a natural thing, it seems that reproducing on a physical level is under attack
- During a slow news time this summer, a French satirist named Corinne Maier put out a tongue in cheek book called No Kids: 40 Good Reasons Not To Have Children

- The National Post listed the 40 reasons back on August 7 – here are some of the ones that jumped out at me:
 - 2. Labour (child birth) is torture
 - 4. You keep having fun
 - 6. You keep your friends
 - 7. You won't have to use that idiot language when talking to kids
 - 8. Open the nursery, close the bedroom
 - 19. Your kid will always disappoint you
 - 28. You can't get away from your kids
 - 34. Motherhood or success: pick one
 - 35. When the child appears, the father disappears
- Tongue in cheek or not, it was amazing how much controversy the book generated
- Letters, columns, rebuttals, outrage – and I'm sure the author laughed all the way to the bank
- One of the Post columnists, Danielle Crittendon, put out a list of her own in response – 40 Reasons To Have Kids, from the August 25th edition – and she had items like:
 - 2 For all their ingratitude and cost, they are a constant source of cheap entertainment.
 - 6 You'll never again have to accept an invitation you don't want: They "get sick" suddenly and without warning.
 - 9 One of them might actually turn out OK and take care of you in your old age.
 - 13 The flowers they pick you might not be fancy but they are the most sincere and beautiful you'll ever receive.
 - 17 They are useful for fetching things from upstairs.
 - 18 They allow you to feel like the smartest person in the world, at least until they reach grade 6.
 - 19 They can fix your computer issues and show you how to work your cellphone and other electronic devices.
 - 20 They will never, ever "friend" you on Facebook.
 - 24 You are not allowed to stay fixed in your ways -- or even get fixed in your ways.
 - 28 You become an expert on which chains of gas stations provide cleaner bathrooms.
 - 29 You find it easy to say no.
 - 31 It's hilarious to watch them annoy people without kids.
 - 32 There are no greater teachers of humility.
 - 33 They make you stronger than you ever believed you could be.
 - 34 You get to read all your favourite childhood stories again. And again.
- But it's not only the lighter side – in a world of “helicopter parenting”, it seems that the exact opposite is coming out
- **Infanticide:** - two different stories in the news right now – one from Quebec where a mother murdered her three children in a failed murder-suicide with her husband, who died – and one from BC, where a father murdered his children – horrible to hear about – so unnatural – I couldn't even keep reading
- The root cause of the two extremes seems to be the same – terminal selfishness, because it becomes all about the adult

Kids: The desire is natural, at some point

- As someone who always thought they'd have kids, but wasn't ready – and then became someone who wanted kids, but was told they couldn't them – I understand the desire to have children
- And as a parent of two very different and wonderful kids, I also understand the fear that goes along with having them
 - Will I measure up? Will I be able to give them everything they need? Will I be able to protect them? Will I ever have a remote control that doesn't have duct tape on it?
- But in spite of the fear, humanity keeps having children – because it's natural – built into our DNA, by God, to continue the amazing, beautiful, flawed human race
- We talked about adoption a couple of weeks ago – beautiful, hard, a rewarding choice – but all life reproduces ultimately, biologically
- And the spiritual side of reproducing has many parallels – because there's a lot of fear involved – and sometimes, some selfishness – but ultimately, the life that God puts in us wants to reproduce – it was meant to “produce a harvest” in the lives of other people

It's not ARE you, it's a question of WHAT:

- Reproduction is natural – it just happens unless you stop it – the question is, WHAT are you reproducing, not ARE you reproducing
- Vision for more churches – on a church level – talk about those dreams – but you can't force it or rush it – but you CAN encourage it and create the conditions for it, help it along
- Vision on a personal level – who are you helping along? Family? Friends? Coworkers?
- Mentoring, friendship – “letting people in”
- Who are you letting see Jesus in you? Who is benefiting from it/Him?
- Soil – what you are, reproduces
- What is coming out of your life, and how does that indicate “the soil you're standing in”?
- We hop from soil to soil in the seasons – sometimes the moments – of our lives
- Depending on our feelings, our moods, even whether we ate lunch, our crises, our relationships
- But rarely, at least for me, do I think about what I'm REPRODUCING
- What is spilling out of me, and what is it creating as I go? Life? Or is it toxic? Is it more death than life?
- Or is it some Halloween style combination of both? Zombie soup?

Why reproducing as a value? (Is it REALLY that important?)

- Life – what doesn't reproduce leaves nothing behind
- Church planting – what doesn't reproduce limits growth – big collapses on itself, or turns into something else of a different type altogether
- (Exponential vs. addition growth)
- Reproducing as church planting
- Reproducing as making disciples/discipling (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:18-20)

Key Thought:

It’s natural, with God’s help, for us to ultimately reproduce the new life that He gives us, in spite of many obstacles.

After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God’s servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It’s not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What’s important is that God makes the seed grow. **1 Corinthians 3:5-7, NLT**

Conclusion: H1N1

- Reproduction – like a virus – H1N1 scare currently underway – “viral” – what’s infectious about YOUR life?

Response: Everything (reprise)