

# *“Sowers for Redemption”*

**Genesis 28: 10-19a; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

Proper 11A

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Prayer for Illumination: Open our hearts and minds,  
O God by the power of your Holy Spirit, as your word  
is proclaimed may we hear with joy what you have for  
us this day. Amen.

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This story I use with permission from a clergy colleague.<sup>1</sup>

A few years ago an idea began gaining popularity and traction in cities around the United States and even more broadly across the world. I'd like to introduce you to the idea:

Guerrilla Gardening.

Clearly, I don't mean Gorilla as in the Lowland Gorilla, but Guerrilla as in Guerrilla warfare.

Though of course, a movement called “Guerrilla Gardening” has nothing to do with war.

Guerrilla gardening is this movement of people who notice the abandoned pieces of land in their community that have been neglected by their owners.

They notice them day after day falling into further decay until they decide, through the subversive act of Gardening... that they will act to make these places beautiful.

They find forgotten places sometimes as small as a patch of dirt on a street corner and sometimes as big as an abandoned lot.

Places - that are overlooked and ugly.

Places - that we would all agree are empty of life and seem completely worthless,

Places - that are dead ...and they revive them.

They come undercover of darkness,

Scattering fresh soil and flower seeds, seeds that grow color, and fragrance and beauty.

They come when no one is watching, planting vegetables and fruit for people in the community to share.

They find abandoned and forgotten pieces of God's creation and they take part in transforming them.

Turning them into places that are full of life,

Turning them into places that adds value and beauty to their surrounding.

These guerrilla gardeners have taken renewal as their calling, and in their eyes, there is no place that is too far removed from redemption.

In a weedy abandoned lot, surrounded by chain link fence... They see a blank canvas where beauty can grow. In a forgotten patch of dirt, a place that is designed to be overlooked... they see hope and opportunity.

In spaces that other people drive by, they see a place that with some work, and love... can have meaning, can have a purpose.

A place that can produce food to share.

A place that can make their community a better place and in some ways our world a better place.

One of the most important tools in the tool belt of the guerrilla gardener is this thing called a “seed bomb.”

They are these small, portable, dried up globes of dirt, clay, and fertilizer that have seeds mixed into it... They are tiny capsules that have everything in them to help a seed grow wherever it lands.

It's designed to be throwable, to be tossed over a fence, or even out of the window of a car. So that wherever a seed bomb is thrown, even on concrete, once it rains, the seeds will germinate and grow.

So, wherever a guerrilla gardener may find themselves as they go about their day...

if they happen to discover a place that looks abandoned or neglected, they are equipped.

All they have to do is throw a seed bomb... and in this small act of gardening rebellion, they know that this neglected place will be just little more beautiful, and little more redeemed, a little more holy, a little more loved.

I want to tell you the story of Ron Finley, a guerilla gardener in South Central Los Angeles.<sup>2</sup> I heard him on a TED Talk a few years ago. He's an artist. He grows his art. Gardening is his graffiti. He beautifies lawns, parkways, the little patch of yard between the sidewalk and the street --- the part that is owned by the city but they ask you to care for it. The soil becomes his piece of art. Trees are the embellishment to that cloth. You'd be amazed at what can happen when you let the soil be your canvas.

Ron shares a lot of stories about the impact his garden had on families in his community, but ultimately he says this is what happened...

He says: “I have witnessed my garden become a tool for the education, a tool for the transformation of my neighborhood. To change the community, you have to change the composition of the soil. We are the soil.

Gardening is an act of defiance in the community, when the city may be used to issuing violations for ‘uncared for’ land.

In this series of parables, Jesus is having a mediocre crop --- certainly mixed results of the people who hear his words. When Jesus speaks in parables, he calls his followers to a change of mind, to the joy of seeing themselves in God’s kingdom.

We hear what the Kingdom of God is like. God has been waiting a long time. Like Ron Finley, we have every opportunity to see not just what the world was like in the past, or what it could be like in the future, but what it is like right now. God’s kingdom is present in the world, which is the field where God’s people are planted to live, work, pray, suffer, struggle, serve witness and finally, in God’s good time, surrender our lives to God.

People of God, here we wait, knowing that Jesus has sown the church among the nations as a witness to God’s patient hope for the world.

The good news proclaimed today is that God is at work to redeem and restore the whole creation.

It’s not uncommon for the church---the people of God to weed

those who have been planted by God. Maybe we've done our share of weeding; shaming; disregarding, separating. Maybe that's something we have to do, repent for in order to see the world a different way. We hear Jesus counsel that more than mere tolerance is needed. The parable compels us to recognize and rejoice in the goodness of God in others, a goodness freely given without distinctions.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus was talking about changing the composition of the soil of this world. About taking people and places that are dead or dying... and bringing life back to them.

And as people who have been redeemed we are called to let this change everything about who we are and how we live.

As people who have learned Christ's ways we are called to start living them out.

To see hope and possibility where the world sees worthlessness.  
To see potential where the world sees hopelessness

And not only see hope and see possibility, but to be a part of creating it with God.

Our calling is to join God in redeeming creation's brokenness.

Have you noticed the brokenness and division in your community?

Why don't we hurl some forgiveness and love over those fences like a seed bomb! Sow some gratitude in that rocky soil. ... and know that all this work, all of this daily effort is a tiny revolution!

May it be so.

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Trip Porch, Seeds of Redemption, Easter Sermon preached in 2017. First Presbyterian Church, Granville, OH.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzZzZ\\_qpZ4w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzZzZ_qpZ4w)

<sup>3</sup> Michael Pasquarello, III, Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43. Connections; A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching and Worship, WJKPress: 2020, p. 168.

A reading from the Gosepl of Matthew Chapter 13.

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43 The Parable of Weeds among the Wheat

Jesus put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?” He answered, “An enemy has done this.” The slaves said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” But he replied, “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

Thanks be to God.