**Faith and Sowing**

Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good. Ecclesiastes 11:6 NASB.

It's spring. My front yard willow tree is starting to leaf out. I see daffodils beginning to bloom, and a few tulips are poking their heads through the soil. A sower planted each of these. My mother, over fifty-years ago, asked my brother-in-law if he would plant a willow in the front of her yard. My husband and I planted daffodils and tulips when we moved in over thirty years ago. We chose what to plant. It is up to the sower to choose what seeds he/she plants.

In the sower's parable, we often focus on the ground types. But today, I want to focus on the sower and the seed we plant. In Jesus' story, we know He was talking about His good seed. The seeds of hope, the seeds of the gospel. These are available to us! These are the seeds we should plant, but alas, sometimes we, ourselves, sow weeds.

We are all sowing something. A couple of weeks ago, I went to Oregon with my daughter and her family to help celebrate Joy Church and their growth and development. We celebrated forty years of ministry of our friends Steve and Kim Schmelzer and then celebrated the setting in of their daughter and her husband as lead pastors. What I didn't expect when we accepted the invite was the amazing affirmation and acknowledgement of the seeds sown by Darryl and me over the years in this church. Some came to me with tears in their eyes, telling me how God used us in their lives. It was so humbling, but also encouraging.

By God's grace, we sowed His words of life. We honored and added value to their field. This isn't something that you have to be in ministry to do. God has given each of us a field to sow. The question is, what seeds are you sowing?

My heart is heavy and hurting as well. I listened to another person share how their adult children want nothing to do with church or Jesus because of an inappropriate word a youth pastor said to them. This happened a few years ago in another town. I don't know this youth pastor, but they did damage. They sowed wrong seeds that are still affecting my relatives' children to this day. I am praying for God to restore and heal them. It made me aware, once again, to guard my tongue and ask the Lord to forgive me if I have ever spoken words that discouraged or brought shame to the kingdom.

There are so many scriptures that warn us about the kind of speaking we do. Ephesians 5:4, Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. I Peter 3:15, But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. I went to my P.A. the other day. He and I are just getting to know each other, but the three times I have seen him, he has used foul language. I am not used to a professional swearing in my appointments! The first two visits, I sort of ignored him, but the third one he used the name of my Savior and I couldn't keep quiet. I have been praying for him and know he is very lost. So out of my mouth, I simply said (with a smile on my face), "Please don't talk about my friend that way." He said, "what?" I said, "Jesus Christ is my friend". He went, "OH", and I said, and I have been praying for you. He just sort of stared at me and said, "thank you". It was sort of awkward, but we went on with the appointment. He has recently retired from the Navy, and I think those words were very acceptable in that culture. I was trying to speak the truth in love and be respectful and gentle. When I left, I mentioned again that I was praying for him. He said, thank you again. We will see what develops!

We plant with our words and our actions. I believe God wants to help us become great sowers. People who sow in wisdom and grace. Seeds sown in anger, bitterness or hatred are not attractive. But it starts in our hearts. We must keep our hearts focused on the Lord. Do not grow weary of sowing sincere seeds of affirmation, words of hope, and words of life. I don't mean flippantly quoting scripture, but God directed speech, released in faith, will produce fruit. For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Hebrews 4:12 NLT. We must let it work first in our life, before we wield it to others.

Don't forget to sow your seeds in prayer. It is a safe place to share your heart and concerns for those you love and care for. As we pray, we can trust God is moving and softening the soil in preparation to receive the seeds. Often we speak before we pray, forgetting to ask for His wisdom on how, when and where to sow. He is the master gardener. Whether we are talking with our children, our parents, friends or co-workers, every time we speak, we are softening the soil or hardening it. It does not mean we can't discuss hard things, but it's the how we do it that makes a difference.

Father, I thank you for helping us in the crucial area. We need your help to show us where, when, what and how to sow good seed, and forgive us when we sow weeds. Father, I don't think we really comprehend how much value our words (seeds) can have...please help us. In Jesus' Name, amen.