

**Scattered Dreams**  
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**July 16, 2023**

I feel like the Parable of the Sower is one of the most self-reflective parables Jesus told.

Jesus is reflecting on how people have and will respond to the message of his movement. How people will respond to Jesus' dream of God's kin-dom.

This dream was at the heart of Jesus' ministry and movement. Daniel Erlander, in his classic, illustrated Bible Study *Manna and Mercy*, describe the dream of God's kin-dom as:

*A new society, a renewed Israel open to all ... a realm of God's extravagant grace, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion ... a place where those labeled unworthy or impure are received unconditionally ... a world of abundant manna shared by all ... a reality worth dropping all other commitments to joyfully receive.*

Jesus seems to wonder out loud, will the dream, like seed be carried off and eaten by the birds, be hijacked, exploited, destroyed by enemies or other forces and used for harmful purposes, devilish ends. Jesus is afraid it will be stolen, misappropriated — extracted and exploited — carried away from its original purpose and employed for other more diabolical and nefarious ends. The message, distorted, is rendered unbelievable.

Jesus seems to wonder out loud, will the dream, like seed falling on rocky soil quickly sprouting and just as quickly drying up and withering way, will the dream like that seed just be a flash in the pan, a passing fade — enthusiastically embraced but quickly discarded, forgotten, or deemed too costly or unsustainable. A shallow moment of revival lacking deep and lasting roots.

Jesus wonders out loud if his dream will be like seed falling among the weeds and thorns, it grows at first but is ultimately choked out, will the dream succumb to a safety and scarcity mentality. Focusing on competing for a perceived limited number of resources; storing up wealth and protecting its riches; obsessing over threats to that wealth instead of searching out opportunities .... leaving a thorny mess that takes more from it Neighbors and environment than it gives back.

Jesus then dares to hope his dream will find fertile soil and good conditions able to set down deep roots and grow beyond expectation.

Jesus, like the parable's sower, is scattering his dreams in every direction not knowing where they will fall, what conditions they will meet, how they will fare or take root.

I wonder what Jesus felt when he told this parable. What was the timber and pitch of his voice? What was the look on his face? What was his body language?

Was he cool, calm, collected? Excited and worked up? Was he angry and frustrated? Or sad and melancholic? All of the above?

Have you scattered a dream to wind and lost it? Was it destroyed, short-lived, distracted from its original purpose?

How did you feel?

I once had a dream of being a seminary professor. I loved school so much I just didn't want to leave. I felt like this had to be the vocation God was calling me to, how God wanted to use my gifts to serve the church.

After graduating from Wesley Theological Seminary, I enrolled in a PHD program in Church History at Catholic University of America. I focused on Christianity in Late Antiquity.

It was a struggle. I struggled with learning the ancient and modern languages. I struggled to connect with my professors and my fellow students. I struggled to get a handle on my course work and my own research. In the end, after two years I simply walked away - leaving with nothing to show for my work or my debt.

I felt like a failure. I felt lost vocationally. I felt like my dream had died, that it had been scattered on rocky soil, sprung up but dried up just as quickly, unable to take root.

It took me a while to recover. To dream a new dream. To have the courage to scatter my dreams to the wind again.

Have you ever had an experience like this?

I think wrestling with experiences of failure is the point of the parable.

It's not about finding the right strategy or technique for success — Jesus does not judge or chastise the sower for scattering Willy nilly all over the place. Or instruct for sowing to only happen in the places, among the people deemed to be “safe” “fertile” “good soil.”

Jesus is a prodigal sower, scattering seed, scattering dreams with apparent lavish extravagance and reckless abandon!

Perhaps the point is about expecting failure. The parables average is 3 out 4 seeds that don't make it, a 75% failure rate.

Looking across the history of the Christianity with honesty reveals Jesus' reflections in the parable of the sower proved right.

Christianity has often been hijacked and used to justify and condone some of the most terrible and destructive deeds perpetuated.

Christianity has produced its fair share of flash in the pan movement and shallow revivals.

Christianity has often been seduced by power, greed and corruption. Allowing abuse, harm, prejudice and discrimination in order to protect its power, prestige and wealth.

And yet, that same seed stolen by the enemy, dried up too quickly in the sun, choked by thorns, that same seed also has the potential to grow deep and sturdy roots, to soak up the sun, drink in the water, gather the soil's minerals and flourish.

Jesus does not say stop sowing. Jesus does not say stop dreaming.

Jesus gives us permission to identify failure and permission to accept that even the best dreams and ideas inspired by God's kin-dom can go sideways, lose sight of their original purpose, and simply run out of steam and come to an end.

Jesus offers the hope that sometime, just sometimes a dream can really take root and grow.

Jesus expects failure, yes, but also expects amazing, surprising things!

This is the reality of scattering dreams out into the world.

The past two weeks I spoke about my hope that together we will be a community that abides by the rhythm of work and rest, that practices the messiness of God's Welcome, of gospel hospitality,

Central has a history of planting seeds of being a place that nurtures and incubates dreams, ministries, and organizations.

I also hope that together we will have the courage to continue joining Jesus' prodigal seed sowing, scattering kin-dom dreams all over the place and that we will have the courage to be patient as the seed germinates and courage to be honest about how those seeds take root and grow. Courage to expect both failure and flourishing.

And courage to trust in the seed's, the dreams' longevity.

Do you know that scientists have grown plants from seeds 500, 1,000, even over 3,000.

A seed can slumber for a long time. Perhaps we could add that Jesus list of what happens to scattered dreams .

Sometimes they get hijacked, stolen, and destroyed.

Sometimes they take off quickly, but lack the roots to survive and flourish for long.

Sometimes they get seduced, distracted, and corrupted by greed and self-survival.

Sometimes they put down deep roots and grow and flourish.

And sometimes ... sometimes ... a dream can slumber.

I mean it took three years of Sanctuary Housing here at Central for Ded and Flora Rranburgaj's kin-dom dream of freedom from the threat of deportation to take root and become a reality.

Perhaps dreams, like seeds, don't die. They just sleep, waiting for the right conditions.

Sometimes dreams are deferred.

*What happens to a dream deferred?* Asks Langston Hughes in his classic poem, *Harlem*.

*Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?*

*Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.*

*Or does it explode?*

May this be a community where dreams explode. wor