

Wasteful Love

July 13, 2008

(Pentecost 9 - Year A)

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

Last Sunday night, I was lying in bed, flipping around the TV channels, just like I always do before I go to sleep.

And as I was flipping around the channels, I was drawn to a TV show on PBS.

This show on PBS was called "The Teachings of Jon."

And the show was about 40-year old man named Jon, who has Down Syndrome.

This TV show opened up the daily life of this man named Jon, who lives with his parents.

Jon cannot have children.

Jon is not able to live independently from his parents.

Jon does not speak, communicating only through the use of a few hand motions.

Every day, Jon gets picked up by a van that take him to work at the community center, folding pieces of paper and brochures.

Jon gets paid for the little amount of work he does.

Sometimes his paycheck is only a few dollars.

At first glance, it would seem as if Jon's life is a waste.

However, what amazed me is that the parents and family and friends of Jon do not see his life as a waste at all.

The title of the TV show was "The Teachings of Jon."

And the message in the show was that Jon, this man who looks funny, who doesn't speak, who cannot make a decent living, has something to teach *us*.

Jon teaches unconditional love, giving hugs to everyone.

Jon teaches people to laugh and to not take life so seriously.

Jon teaches everyone to slow down and to enjoy each and every day.

Yet, on the surface, it would seem that Jon, disabled by Down Syndrome, would not be able to bear much fruit.

On the surface, it would seem that Jon's life was tragic, not growing in good soil.

It would seem that Jon's life, scattered by the sower, had fallen on the path, had sprouted among the rocks or had been choked by thorns. But God takes what we consider trash and waste, and God teaches us about God.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells a parable, which is simply a story that has a deeper and spiritual meaning.

Jesus starts his story by saying:

“A man went out to sow.”

Then, as the story goes on, we hear that the seeds scattered by the sower are *not* planted in the same way that I plant, by carefully putting each seed and each plant in a specific place or pot.

Instead, the sower in Jesus' story throws the seeds all over the place.

And, we are told that the seeds fall in 4 different places:

First, some seeds fall on the path.

And then, the birds come and eat them.

Second, some seeds fall on rocky ground.

And then, the plants come up quickly, then are quickly scorched.

Third, some seeds fall among thorns.

And then, the thorns and weeds choke out the new plant.

Finally, some seeds fall on good soil.

And from those seeds grain comes forth, abundantly.

Many people have explained this story to me as a story that tells us that we are all supposed to try and be the good soil.

However, I think that there is another side to this story.

Because, why would God, the sower of the seeds, scatter his love on the path or on the rocky ground or among the thorns?

Why would God be so wasteful with the seeds?

Why would God create someone who has Down Syndrome?

These questions lead me to believe that there is another side to the story of the seeds and the sower.

Because I believe that God does not waste seeds.

I believe that God takes what we consider trash and waste, and God teaches us more about God.

In Jesus' story, some of the seeds fall on the path and the birds eat them.

Well, those seeds certainly did feed the birds, which is a good thing.

And, how do we not know that the seeds didn't enter the bird and were spread on to a different place to flourish?

Secondly, in Jesus' story, some of the seeds fall on rocky ground, the plants grow up quickly and then die quickly in the shallow soil.

Yet, how do we not know that the plant was not a dandelion that grew quickly in a crack in the rock?

A dandelion that delighted children one day as the children blew on it and watched the feathery white pieces float away.

Lastly in Jesus' story, some of the seeds fall among thorns.

Yet how do we not know that the thorns were from beautiful rose bushes, filled with roses that were picked one day to cheer up someone who was sick?

For God takes what we consider trash and waste, and God teaches us in a new way.

And, some seeds are people, people who are not fortunate enough to land in good soil.

Some seeds are adults with Down Syndrome or anorexic girls or premature babies or boys with a cleft lip.

Yet, God does *not* consider these people to be trash or waste.

Instead, God teaches us something about love and about acceptance and about forgiveness and about God, through these people who land in rocky, shallow or thorny soil.

For I believe that what drew me to that television show last Sunday
night,
I believe that what captivated me about the story of the man named Jon,
with Down Syndrome,
Was that I was, mysteriously, seeing a story about God.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah gives a prophesy, a prophesy
that many people consider to be a prophesy about the coming
Messiah.

Isaiah proclaims:

“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his
appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and familiar with
suffering.”¹

Our God knows what it is like to be considered trash or waste, to be
unattractive, to be despised and rejected, to be scattered among the
rocks and thorns.

Yet God does not create trash.

God doesn't make junk.

And God does not limit his planting to just the “good soil” only.

So, be glad that God scatters his love on all people - people like you and
me - people who are sometimes shallow, sometimes rocky,
sometimes thorny.

For God takes what we consider trash and waste, and God teaches us
about love.

AMEN.

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¹ Isaiah 53: 2b-3a