

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (7/12-13/2008)

Isaiah 55/10-11, Psalm 65, Romans 8/18-23, Matthew 13/1-23

Thank God for people who plant trees.

Thank God for farmers who sow crops every year and for people who cultivate flowers, even if only in a box on their deck.

I say “thank God” because these people cultivate not only trees and grain and beautiful flowers, but also hope.

Somehow, the way I look at it, a tree-planter is betting on the future.

He or she may not see that tree come to full fruition, but future generations will benefit from his or her practical optimism.

The farmer takes a risk that his outlay for seed and fertilizer will pay off with a bumper crop.

He plants even though he knows the sun and wind and rain and soil will be the chief cooperators in his endeavor, and he has no control over them.

This growing season has been a disaster for many enterprising farmers.

The flower growers rely on color and form to brighten their world.

Whether those flowers are cultured and precise, or wild and uninhibited, they bring beauty and light to our world.

One of the aspects of the Rocky Mountains I have always looked forward to is the proliferation of summer wild flowers throughout the trip.

It begins on the ride out with the fields and ditches full of sunflowers across Nebraska and eastern Colorado.

Once in the mountains, I climb above tree line onto a rocky slope and there, in the least likely of locations, may be a cluster of Indian paintbrush or the beautiful and fragile columbine.

All of this may seem remote from the parable of the farmer sowing seed that Jesus relates today.

But it is not, because the farmer sows with hope in his heart.

Some of what he sows falls on unreceptive ground and withers away; some falls on fertile ground and brings forth grain or barley or corn or beans in abundance.

Failure and success in the Kingdom accompany the very act of sowing seed.

You can expect both in your life, even in the Kingdom Jesus preaches.

The biblical explanation of this parable speaks of the seed as being the word of God.

The word of God manifests itself in many ways, in beauty and sometimes in ugliness, in success and sometimes in failure, in freedom and sometimes in slavery, in virtue and sometimes even in sin.

God's word like the rain and the seed falls everywhere.

Isaiah says it so well today: *"Thus says the Lord: just as from the heavens, the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth and make it fertile...so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."*

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us of your Kingdom all about us.

Thank you, growers and planters, for taking Isaiah's and Jesus' words to heart and bringing hope into our lives.

Praise God, all you flowers and trees and bushes on the earth.