

# Sermon for Sunday, March 21, 2021 - "The Way of the Seed"

Fifth Sunday in Lent  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

"We're stuck, can you please come help?" I perhaps should have been a bit more clear with my husband Matt when I made that request of him a number of years ago.

I'd taken our young kids on a dog walk by the Upper Iowa River. We were having a wonderful time when all of a sudden, the ground beneath us gave way. We found ourselves trapped in thick, heavy mud. We tried to free ourselves but the harder we pulled, the faster we sank. We were all quickly waist deep in mud and sinking. I needed reinforcements, and quickly, so I called Matt.

"Stuck - what do you mean?" Matt asked. I replied with some urgency, "We're stuck in the mud by Chatahoochee Park, please come help." I forgot to mention that we'd gotten stuck while walking. Matt heard *stuck* and *mud* and he pictured a car needing a tow. Past history of other incidents with me and vehicles *may* have played a role in what he pictured. He got off the phone and got going, preparing our other car to tow us out. This meant he showed up to help about 25 minutes after I called.

Meanwhile the kids and I sank deeper and deeper in the mud. Meanwhile the dog circled around and around trying his best with the helping strategy of barking as loud as he possibly could. I felt increasingly panicked wanting to help my kids, wanting to fix this. Finally, I realized that we just had to stop moving, stop trying to pull ourselves out, stop trying to save ourselves. The more we struggled, the more stuck we got. It was totally counter-intuitive, but we had to surrender to the mud and wait for Matt to come lift us out. I was reminded of that incident this week when I was walking through spring mud and pondering the Gospel reading for today.

In many ways, we are all so stuck. Stuck in racism, consumerism, violence. Stuck in sin. Our sin weighs us down and traps us. It separates us from one another. It holds us back from the abundant, everlasting life that God wants us to experience, that God wants all people to know.

Often when we are confronted with our sinfulness, we feel a sense of panic. When we see our racism and violence and all the ways we harm the earth and others, we want to defend ourselves, protect ourselves, do something quickly to fix things. We bark loudly, hoping that will help. Yet the way to God's freedom and abundance for all is not found in trying to secure and save and preserve our own lives. It is not found in racing around and making a lot of noise. The way to God's freedom and abundance is surrender.

Jesus says, "Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." The word hate that Jesus uses here doesn't refer to emotions. It doesn't mean Jesus wants us to despise ourselves. Rather, the word refers to detachment and separation from the ways of this broken world. Except we can't detach and separate from this world's ways on our own. The more we try to free ourselves, the more stuck we get. We are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

Thankfully, Jesus shows us another way - the way of the seed. Jesus describes how a seed falls into the earth, is buried and dies. If it doesn't fall into the earth and die it remains just a small seed; but if it dies it bears much fruit. Jesus calls into this way of the seed. Jesus calls us to fall into the rich, dark soil of God, the source of all life. Jesus calls us to surrender, to die to our small selves, to let go of striving and struggling and entrust ourselves to God.

This can feel counter-intuitive. Shouldn't we be working and striving against the sin that is within us and within the world? Shouldn't we be doing something? We are indeed called to act and engage in the world. Yet for that action to bear fruit and bring life, we need to be grounded in God. We need to be deeply rooted in God's love for the whole world. If we operate out of our own small, ego driven selves, we will not bear good fruit. We need to surrender into God so that our small, ego driven selves can die again and again.

Usually, the willingness to surrender only happens when we realize we are stuck, when we come up against the limits of our ability to fix things on our own. Many of us have come to that place during this difficult year. We've felt so overwhelmed by the magnitude of human sinfulness, violence, racism. We've felt so powerless in the face of it all. This year has been so painful and hard. Yet it is also fertile ground for drawing us into the way of the seed, the way of surrender, the way of dying to our small selves, the way of Jesus.

This way of the seed is not a way that we can choose and follow on our own. It is the work of Jesus to draw us into it. Jesus came among us and took this path of surrender. Now Jesus is present with us to accompany us on the way of the seed. Jesus is present to assure us that we can trust God, surrender to God.

Beloved of God,

Jesus is at work in all that is so painful and hard to draw you into God, into the source of all life.

Jesus is at work to help you fall into the rich, dark soil of God where you can wait and trust that God is bringing life for you and through you.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer and reflection.