

Outpouring and Indwelling Romans 8:1-11

This week's epistle text is Paul's springtime seed catalog. Paul knows that the power for the next generation of faith lives within this generation. It's the power of the Spirit of Christ, the power of the one raised from the dead, that will instill new life wherever it takes root. Paul's exact words are "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (v.11).

All those who welcome God's Spirit, who are open to the life-giving, life-altering power that the Spirit offers are God's "seeds." We may look dead on the outside, yet within we harbor the capability for tremendous new life with Christ. Calvary changed everything. Easter morning gave us the possibility of an eternal spring for all people of faith.

In our text today, Paul observes that "though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (v.10).

Each one of us is a withered, sad looking seed. But because of Jesus Christ's seedtime and harvest, we have the potential of being infused with the Spirit of God, which, Paul says, "...gives life to your mortal bodies."

We don't have to be gifted with special spiritual "super-powers" to pass along the gift of new life. We just have to be able to nurture a seed along so that it can bear fruit. To bear fruit is to seed Christ's Spirit into the world. To bear the fruit of the indwelling Spirit of Christ is to offer a new crop of love and forgiveness and repentance to yet another new generation.

And every new generation must make that choice. Every new generation must embrace that Spirit, for themselves and for the future because no one is "born" a disciple. We are all only "born again" disciples.

When the outpouring of God's Spirit leads to an indwelling of the Spirit in each of us, there will be a fruit-bearing of the Spirit in others and in the world

Outpouring and Indwelling is not something we do ourselves, but something God does through us...the communal us. The outpouring begins with the triune God, where the Spirit "flows" from the Father through the Son to us so that we might receive the fullness of God and share that fullness with others.

But like every good gardener we have to do some groundwork. We have to make our lives offer a fertile, nurturing place for that Spirit to grow and thrive. We have to deal with muck and some manure and get grime under our fingernails. If we do our gardening in the Spirit, the Spirit will bring the seeds of faithfulness to fruition.

In Matthew 7:22-23 Jesus chides those who are following him, not because of what they had been doing, but because of their spiritual attitude. Basically in that text Jesus says to would-be followers: "You taught my stuff, you mastered my teaching; you healed and performed miracles: you even cast out demons in my name; but . . . you did not know me!"

These "do diligence disciples" did all their research, knew all the facts and formats, but they lacked relational connection, or "seed time" with Jesus. Jesus needs to "know" us in order to be in relationship with us.

When we are truly in relationship with the divine, God's indwelling presence changes us – not just our actions, but our attitudes, our language, our thought – our very being.

The “seed” of the Spirit is brought into this world as we share the story of Jesus with the world. God is revealed to the world most effectively person by person, as one disciple invites a potential disciple into an ongoing relationship wherein the Good News can be shared. And it's that relationship that's crucial in order for the seeds of the Spirit to germinate for a new generation, for a new springtime of harvest, for a spring of salvation.

But remember: the seed is in the fruit. When the outpouring leads to an indwelling, there will be a fruit-bearing, and the fruit will contain the seeds for reproduction: if you seed hate, hate comes back at you; if you seed love, love comes back at you.

We must always be prepared for the surprising play of the Spirit to bring the fiery foliage of love in many colors that come from being faithful disciples of the Lord of love, freely and recklessly casting the seeds of forgiveness and tolerance and acceptance and forbearance to those around us.

Always be watchful and prepared: Sometimes the Holy Spirit puts on a Big Show. Be a part of that Big Show of Love this springtime.