

## **A LESSON FROM THE APPLE**

### *A Reflection on Stewardship and Building the Kingdom of God*

Summer is a season of growth. Whether gardens consist of flowers or vegetables, they are thriving. The warm summer sun, water from refreshing showers, and nutrients from rich soil, all combine to support new shoots, leaves, flowers, seeds, vegetables and fruit.

The fourth chapter of the Gospel of Mark narrates Jesus' parable of the sower who went out to sow.

"And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

Jesus himself interprets the parable to his disciples. The key element of the parable is the sowing of the seed, representing the breakthrough of the Kingdom of God into the world. The various types of soil refer to the diversity of response accorded the Word of God. The climax of the parable is the harvest of thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold, indicating the fulfillment of the kingdom. The Kingdom of God, initiated by Jesus in proclaiming the Word, continually develops by the concrete actions of his followers until it is fully established at the final judgment.

Purposeful living entails hearing, understanding and implementing the Word of God. The practice of stewardship is intrinsic in Christian discipleship.

Vatican Council II teaches that the Kingdom of God is present in history, imperfect but real. It will come to fulfillment by God's power, on his terms, in his own time. In the interim, people through their worthy deeds of this life make a limited but real human contribution to building the Kingdom of God. They do so with an eye to present happiness and also to the perfect fulfillment which the Kingdom – and themselves as part of it – will enjoy in the life to come. The Council teaches that the purpose of the human vocation to "earthly service" of one's fellow human beings is precisely to "make ready the material of the celestial realm."

Our parish has been incredibly graced by an understanding of the spirituality of stewardship. We have come to understand that all that we are and all that we have are gifts from God. In gratitude for these gifts, we have come to experience profound happiness in giving back to God the first portion of our time, talent and treasure to help build the Kingdom.

These stewardship-inspired concrete actions of sharing our gifts of time, talent and treasure may be thought of as seed that fell on rich soil, grew and yielded fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

The immeasurable potential for building the Kingdom of God from our concrete actions is expressed in the following statement.

"Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed."

Ed Sampson  
Stewardship Commission Chairman