

¹ Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." ⁹ Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Somewhere in my youth I came across a picture of Johnny Appleseed. He was depicted as a tall, gangly young man, wearing a floppy broad-brimmed hat, flannel-looking shirt with rolled up sleeves, jeans that were frayed at the bottom and ended well above his ankles, and he was shoeless. He was in the middle of a gigantic stride, holding a staff in his left hand and with his right hand held a sack that was slung over his shoulder. From the sack were tumbling seeds which fell to the ground behind him. His attitude and his look were carefree. This was no farmer; no cultivator of the soil; no arborist; no extension agent from the local agricultural college. From the picture, it would seem that his only purpose in life was to make sure that everyone, everywhere had the opportunity to be exposed to apples.

Although Jesus goes on to explain this parable in allegorical terms, with the seed being the word of God, the identity of the sower is left somewhat ambiguous. God, Jesus, the apostles, the Church, you and I, are all candidates for that role. All to whom the word has been given are called to spread the word in the world. Like Johnny Appleseed, we are all to be carefree, or even careless, in allowing the word to spill out into the world with every step we take. Some may be specifically called to cultivate the soil, prune back the brambles or even chase off the birds, but all believers are called to proclaim the Good news in their conversations, their actions and their attitudes. Our purpose is to make sure that everyone, everywhere has the opportunity to be exposed to the Gospel, which is Jesus Christ.

Lord, you have entrusted me with your word. May I allow that word to spill out of my life through every action that I take, every conversation that I have, every relationship I experience and every attitude I manifest. Thank you for not giving me the responsibility for the success of the crop, but only the joyful task of sowing the seed. Amen.