

The Kernel of the Problem

Jesus once told a story about a crazy farmer who sprayed seed like a knuckle-ball pitcher in a high wind. Perhaps he was hung over from a recent binge, or currently drunk with the prospect of a bumper crop. At any rate, Matthew 13.3-8 says he slung the stuff with such abandon that it hit the sidewalk and the Johnson grass just as heavily as the tilled furrows.

One thing this guy knew: you can't bring in a bumper crop if you skimp on the seed. And this was special seed, too. About seven bushels of harvest for every bushel invested was standard ROI in those days; ten-to-one was a windfall. Jesus sets the minimum dividend at thirty-to-one and the top-end at one hundred. Clearly this man had gotten hold of some sort of Barry Bonds hybrid. These grains had been juicing! That may explain why the sower couldn't contain himself as he whipped his bounty into the wind. He believed his stuff could grow wheat in a parking lot.

Our own world confronts a similar situation. Scientists working in Africa have engineered a variety of rice that flourishes with minimal irrigation or fertilizer. Properly handled, it triples the output of standard strains in half the growing season. It has the potential to green up the arid continent and transform feast to famine. These "New Rices for Africa," or "Nericas," are unpatented, public domain superhero seeds that anyone can use. Like the über-seed of Jesus' free-for-all farmer, the New Rices offer nourishment to drought-diminished tribes and profit to poverty-stricken nations.

Problem is, the world lacks sufficient seed-slingers. It seems that only a few African farmers now plant this rice on five percent of the farmland where it could thrive. Researchers blame the problem partly on lack of access to the seeds, but also on lack of awareness. Farmers don't know the Nericas have arrived, so they keep ploughing the same old furrows.

Jesus indicates that the Kingdom has little use for restraint. Wind-whipped wheat, full-investment of venture capital, and mutant mustard seeds that think they're Sequoias: the Master clearly believed he brought a new kind of grain, a new life with power to engender abundance where scarcity presently rules. He put no patent on the product; required no ethnic pedigree to partake or priestly imprimatur to distribute. Anyone can grab a bagful of eternal life and have at it.

The tragedy is that this bread of life grows in such a small percentage of human hearts. One problem is that we are too often stingy sowers who refuse to waste our seed on what seems unpromising soil. But the master

Farmer calls us to go a little crazy. Let's be shotgun seed-slingers, drunk on the possibilities of gospel power. Let's sow in a high wind of joy in order to reap a whirlwind of souls.

Let 'Er Rip!
Doug