

We planted the seeds. Carrots and peas and beans and corn and sunflowers followed
 We ~~followed~~ the directions on the ~~box~~ package as best we could, ~~and~~ preparing the soil, placing the seed at the proper depth, covering the seeds, firming the soil over them. Guess what came up? Carrots where we had planted carrots, peas where we had planted peas, corn, beans sunflowers the same. O, the weeds are there, always the weeds are there needing hoeing and pulling, but the crop looks mighty healthy now. If the hail stays away, and the wind and the rain and the heat are not too harsh we will have an abundant harvest.

Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Carrots from carrots, peas from peas, beans from beans, corn from corn. Even a child knows as much.

Do not be deceived, Paul writes, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

I used to think there was something I could say, some right words that would make a difference for the people I visit. There must be some blessing I could speak from God with which ^{would touch} ~~touch~~ the hearts of his people and make it ~~be~~ better. There must be the right words to say ^{would to} ~~that~~ could transform the darkness into light, the despairing ^{filling} ~~heart~~ ^{heart} with hope. I've looked for that miracle crop that goes from planting to harvest in a moment. But I find that when the weeds have grown up year after year, and the heart is not ^{replenish} renewed and refreshed with God's word and sacrament, ~~it is a soft gentle vine~~, that there is nothing to harvest. In times of trouble faith is a miracle even for those who have ~~been~~ ^{shown} faithfully and tended carefully, for the ones who have practiced years of neglect the darkness so often overwhelms.

It is like what I tell the couples that are soon to be married. Your marriage will not just happen, but will take your time and your commitment and your hard ~~at~~ work. Sometimes they don't like to hear all of that. They want to hear that because they love each other nothing will ever defeat them. They want to hear that they will be happy every day in every way, that all

the struggles and trials of marriage will never touch them. I tell them instead that in fifty years if they have been faithful, and fought for their marriage and fortunate enough still to both ~~be~~ be alive, in fifty years ^{then} they may really know something about love, ~~and marriage~~.

Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

A rabbi wrote a book,, When bad things happen to good people. He wanted to tell the world that sometimes what we reap has nothing to do with what we have sown. Children suffer from disease, or are beaten, or are crippled by war, they have sown nothing to deserve such a harvest. Our God is not in the business of rewarding and punishing, paying back a thoughtless word with cancer. Another one called a rabbi, Jesus said that God ~~sends his rain on the~~ ^{makes his sun rise on} evil and ~~and~~ on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. Someone has suggested as well that the next book written should be entitled, When good things happen to bad people. We do not always reap what we have sown, sometimes to our disadvantage, more often to our advantage.

~~Whatever~~ One year I never planted tomatoes, tomatoes grew from fruit left to rot on that ground the season before. One year I planted tomatoes and hail came a destroyed my crop, what we plant we do not always reap, but if I want toatoes I would be a fool not to plant them and take the best care of them that I can.

If you want faith and hope and joy and love, the best way to get them is to sow God's word in your heart and provide all the space you can for that word to grow.

For he who sows to his own flesh will from ~~the~~ flesh reap corruption,; but he who sows to the spirit will from the S^ririt reap eternal life.

Truly there is but one sowing to the spirit. We have witnessed that sowing this day. Two new creations of God were sown into ~~two~~ lives this day as Amanda and Susan were baptized. The seeds were sown into two hearts along-side of ~~the~~ noxious weeds. The old Adam, their sinful self, their ~~own~~ flesh, these are names for the weeds that have taken root there. Like creeping Jenny,

pull these weeds from the soil of their heart and new shhots will spring forth again and again. Greed, selfishness, hatred, bitterness and anger, pride an jealousy and envy these are the fruits that will come from this weed, and every fruit will provide more seed, more weeds to overwhelm, overrun the heart ~~unt~~ until there is no hope. These girls are powerless over these weeds, as each of us is powerless over the sin in our hearts. Only Christ ^{who has the root in baptism} who comes through the Holy Spirit can chop down this weed limiting its damage until that day when the final hargest has come and the weeds are all through into the fire.

But this day another seed was sown. A new creation. Its fruits are love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and selfcontrol. These fruits too produce more seed, more plants to grow so that the whole garden of their hearts may be covered and enveloped in faith and hope and love.

Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. I think about these two young girls. I think of how much a part of their growing environment we are, this church is. From us they will learn of God, from us they will learn of what it is to love and care for one another in the church. How will we provide for them?

One thing I have felt deeply in recent years is that we here at Hettinger Lutheran have gotten into the habit of thinking that the sowing is up to some one else. Most all of us tend to think of this as thier church, ~~even~~ though we can never identify just who they are.

We, as the church also sow. We sow ^{a spirit} ~~one kind of seed~~ as we love one another and committ ourselves to our life together, as we gladly serve, as we thank and give thanks for one another, ^{as we help them in need.}

We sow yet another kind of seed when we complain and criticize and blame, ~~the~~ The seeds that you sow in your attitudes and actions will determine the kind of church Susand and Amanda will know.

Sometimes I am privileged to witness the faith that comes from years and years of sowing to the sprit. ~~Like xxxxxxxxx~~ There is no treasure like it this plant called faith. I've seen every other thing that people can treasure

taken away; Family, friends wealth, health, but as long as this one gift, faith, remains, then I see the light shining in the darkness and the darkness not overcoming it. God is present, and faith knows it. It is the beginning of eternal life.