



Upper Level Day 3

By Katherine Rath

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Objectives:

1. The students will discuss the meaning of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed.
2. The students will identify the Holy Spirit as the one who creates faith in people's hearts.
3. The students will identify necessities for growing plants.
4. The students will make connections between growing plants and growing faith.
5. The students will locate Bulgaria on a map of the world.
6. The students will discuss how the WELS Outreach to Roma mission in Bulgaria is fulfilling the Great Commission.
7. The students will explain how they can be a part of fulfilling the Great Commission.
8. The students will pray for others who do not believe in Jesus as their Savior.

Materials:

For teaching the lesson:

- Bibles
- Bag containing: Spade, seeds, stuffed bird or picture of a bird, rocks, dirt
- Peat cups (3-inch size) or other containers that seed may be planted in
- Seeds (lima beans, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seed, or chives may be good choices)
- Pencils
- Blank printer paper (white or colored, one sheet per student)
- Video instructions on how to make a booklet out of a single paper (See Resources)

For further reading:

- *The People's Bible—Matthew*, by G.J. Albrecht and M.J. Albrecht, pp. 188-191, 194-197

Introduction:

1. Show students a medium-sized bag and have them guess what they think is inside. After fielding a few guesses, reveal each item, one at a time, and have the students guess why you have these items for class today.
(Items included in the bag are: Spade, seeds, stuffed bird or picture of a bird, rocks, dirt. Remove in any order you wish.)
2. As needed, ask students what a person could do with all of these supplies.
(They might be confused by the bird and the rocks, but they should hopefully recognize that the other items would be used to plant flowers or crops. Once the conversation gets onto farming/ planting, discuss how birds and rocks might cause issues if you were planting a garden.)
3. Like today, farming was an important occupation in Jesus' time because it provided food for the people. Many Jews were familiar with planting seeds and growing crops, so Jesus used farming as an example to teach a spiritual lesson in one of his many parables. In today's lesson, we will read this parable and discuss how it still has meaning for Christians today.

Bible Story:

Reading the Story:

1. Distribute Bibles and have the students open their Bibles to Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.
2. Choose a method for reading the text aloud—the teacher reads to students, the students take turns reading the text, or ask for a student volunteer to read.
3. Optional: Ask students to draw a comic strip version of the story as they hear it read.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the first two seeds not grow into strong plants?
(The first fell on the hard path where it couldn't sink into the soil and was eaten by birds. The second did sink into the soil, but since the soil was rocky and shallow, the plants withered in the sun without deep roots.)
2. What caused the plants that sprang up from the third group of seeds to fail?
(Thorns choked them out.)
3. How was the final group of seeds able to produce a hundred times what was sown?
(That seed fell on good soil where it could be strongly rooted and grow well.)
4. Discuss the meaning of each piece of the story as described in verses 18-23.

Application:

1. What might the people described in the parable's meaning look like in today's world?
(Answers will vary, but may include: Hard path people—those who are vehemently opposed to Christianity, whether from bad past experiences with the church or whether they were raised to despise Christians; Rocky places – new converts to Christianity who are discouraged when something in their lives go wrong; Thorns – modern day worries like financial concern, worries over what people think of you, etc.; Good soil – people whose hearts are open to hearing God's Word, perhaps children; Producing a crop – faith that leads a person to share God's Word with others)
2. How are we like the hard path, rocky soil, or thorny soil people at times?
(Answers will vary.)
3. When you plant seeds for flowers, does anything happen right away?
(No)
4. Discuss with students what happens underground when a seed is planted. If time and technology allow, you may be able to find a good video online that shows this process.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w77zPAAtVTul>
(The process of germination includes the seed sprouting roots and spreading the roots both wide and deep into the soil. Eventually, a shoot forms and pushes its way above the surface of the soil.)
5. Can a farmer or gardener see how many roots the seed has sprouted? What do they get to see?
(No, they don't see the roots. However, after a longer amount of time, they can see the above-ground plant begin to grow.)
6. Is the farmer the one that makes the seed grow? Why or why not?
(No, he or she plants the seeds and tries to make sure that the seed has plenty of water and sunlight, but the farmer can't force a seed to grow.)

7. How is spreading God's Word similar to planting a seed?
(We can't see if the Word has taken root in a person's heart. It may also take a long time before the Word we preached begins to grow in the person's heart. We have to trust that the Holy Spirit is working "under the surface" even if it seems like our work did nothing on the outside.)
8. What does a plant need to live, even after it has sprouted?
(Sunlight, carbon dioxide, water, nutrients in the soil – Note: Without these things, a plant may wither or even die.)
9. What do we need to keep our faith strong?
(We need to hear God's Word regularly to be encouraged by God's promises and what he has already done for us. Remembering our baptism can serve the same purpose. When a Christian is old enough to be confirmed, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper also feeds his or her faith.)
10. Like planting a seed, can we see how God works in our own hearts or other people's hearts through the Word and Sacraments?
(No, but just as when we share our faith with others we have to trust that God will work inside of them, we also trust that God's Word works within us as well.)
11. When we share God's Word with others, is the pressure on us to give the other person faith?
(No. Remind students that God is the one working in people's hearts when we share God's Word. God can even work through our words if we stumble over what to say.)
12. Ask students to write down at least one person they know who does not hear God's Word on a regular basis. Then, have students write a short prayer, asking God to help them be a "seed sower" in that person's life and asking Him to help the Word take root in that person's life.
(Note: Teachers do not need to collect this.)

kids c.a.r.e. Connection:

As we look to spread the seeds of God's Word to others outside of God's sheep pen, we should remember that we can reach out to people that we know personally, and we can help support missionaries and others who reach out to people throughout the world, even people we have never met.

Have the students turn to Matthew 28:19-20. Read the Bible passage together.

Who does this passage encourage us to reach out to with God's Word? *(People from all nations.)*

Included in all nations is our focus group for this week: the Roma people in Bulgaria. Point out Bulgaria on a map (Resource B). Although we have never met (and may never meet) any of the Roma people in Bulgaria, we can support those who spread God's Word in that part of the world through our offerings. Let's read a few stories about our Outreach to Roma in Bulgaria to hear about the work that our mission offerings can support.

1. <https://wels.net/mission-stories-bulgarian-lutheran-church/>
2. <https://wels.net/missions-newsletter2017-romani/>

Memory Verses:

(Theme Passage) John 10:16 "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

Mt 9:37b-38 "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest."

Mt 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, Thank you for planting your Word within our hearts and strengthening it each day through the Word and Sacraments. Help us and other Christians to spread your life-saving Gospel message to others who need it the most. Please work in the hearts of those who reject your Word or have it choked out by worldly worries so that faith may be planted in their hearts and grow an abundant harvest. We especially pray for our mission to the Roma people in Bulgaria—please bless the work done by missionaries there and plant seeds of faith in the people who hear your Word. We pray this in your Name. Amen.

Activities:

Mini-Prayer Book

Following the instructional video (Resource A), model for the students step-by-step how to make a small booklet out of a single sheet of paper. Then, with the students, brainstorm people that they would like to pray for—perhaps people who do not yet know Jesus, or perhaps people whose faith could be encouraged and strengthened. The student will then write a short prayer on each of the pages of the book. (Encourage the students to include one prayer about our mission work with the Roma people in Bulgaria.)

Plant Seeds and Watch Them Grow

Distribute peat cups or similar small containers in which students can plant seeds. Allow students to fill (or the teacher may fill) the cups with soil, using a scoop or spoon. Distribute seeds of your choice (lima beans, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, or chives may be good choices). Instruct students to plant the seeds deeply into the soil. Students may add a small amount of water to keep the soil damp. Discuss with students how they can continue to take care of the seed after they take it home—by putting the cup in a sunny spot and watering it every day (being careful not to use too much water for the small cup). Remind the students that it may take several days or a week to see any change on the surface.

Music:

Spread, Oh, Spread the Mighty Word (CW 576) Verses 1, 5, and 6

Verses 1, 5, and 6 of this hymn reinforce the message from today's Bible story, telling us to spread God's Word to every kingdom on Earth. It also reminds us that God is the only Lord of Harvest-- he is the one who ultimately creates faith in listeners' hearts.

1. Spread, oh spread the mighty Word;

Spread the kingdom of the Lord

Ev'rywhere his breath has giv'n

Life to beings meant for heav'n

5. Up! The rip'ning fields you see.

Mighty shall the harvest be,

But the reapers still are few;

Great the work they have to do.

6. Lord of harvest, grant anew,

Joy and strength to work for you,

Till the gath'ring nations all

See your light and heed your call.

Extension Activities:

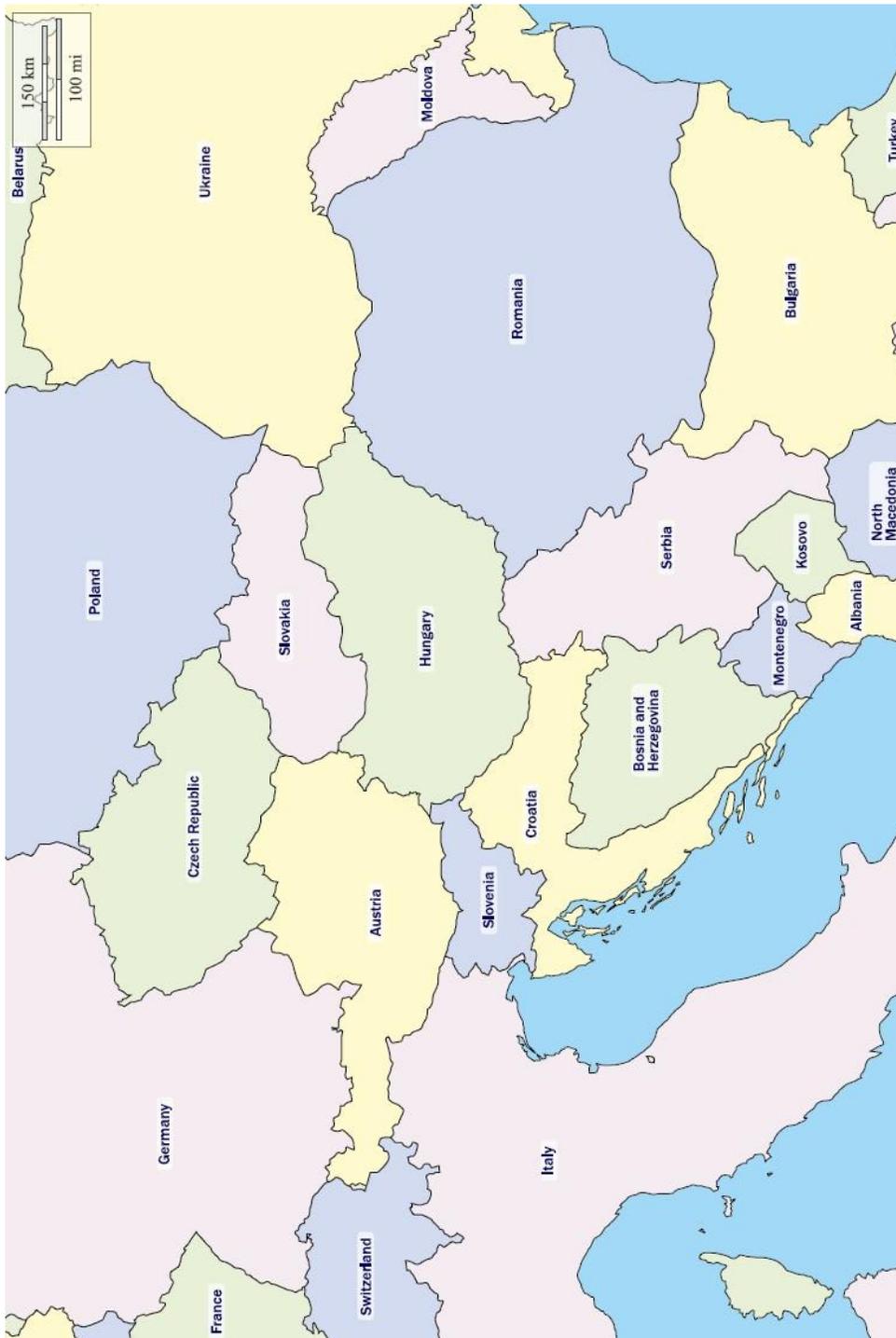
Games:

Explain or participate in these traditional Roma games as your space allows.

Tug-of-War – The traditional game is thought to have originated with Roma people in Poland.

Wheeling Rolling – Traditionally, the Roma people would race to a predetermined location while rolling a cart or bicycle wheel alongside them. This activity could be modified to have students roll a hula hoop beside themselves while racing others.

Resources



Video of how to make a mini-book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21qi9ZcQVto>