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# **Then Came the Seed Snatcher**

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**Series: Let God Be God**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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There is very little question that dealing with the devil has become a religion of its own in our generation. In many circles, the Lordship of Christ has been eclipsed or at least given co-billing with concentrating on the “dangers of demons”, and the focus of many fellowships has shifted from resting in the power of God to resisting the power of the enemy. To some, at least, Satanic undertones lie beneath the surface of virtually every passage of Scripture and the key to victory in the Christian life rests in learning to “find the enemy” and “bind the enemy.”

Satan gets the blame and thus gets the credit for virtually every catastrophe, every problem, every inconvenience and every sickness. Thus, he begins to appear front and center on the stage of life while the Living God must move quietly into the background, awaiting His cue to appear for some major battle to confront the enemy in some miraculous form. The end result is that Satan becomes the star of the show, and God simply waits in the wings for opportunities to do the dramatic. The fruits of such a theology often include a kind of paranoia in the life of the believer who is frantically looking over his shoulder for the entrance and effects of the demonic host.

That’s not a very victorious existence. But at the other end of the spectrum, there are those who simply deny that such a person as the devil exists. They refer to an “evil force” at work in this world and decline to acknowledge that he possesses the attributes of personality, any real authority in this world or access to the heart of the child of God. And many seminaries, sad to say, are actually teaching this blasphemy. So while both extremes generate problems, the latter is far more dangerous for whenever you deny the existence of an enemy, you are, in effect, surrendering to that enemy the moment he decides to attack.

The Scriptures, however, give us a very balanced picture of Satan. He is described in great detail, but always to give us an understanding of his tactics, not a fear of his actions. At every turn, we are admonished to be aware of his authority, but to be even more aware of the far greater authority and power of the indwelling Christ. In fact, nearly every time you see the power of

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Satan mentioned in the New Testament, it is mentioned to draw attention to the power of God. Mark it. The Word of God is not a harbinger of fear:

For God hath not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (II Timothy 1:7)

So I approach this lesson with great caution. Our purpose is not to generate attention for the evil one. Our purpose is to draw attention to the remarks that Jesus made about the evil one and the resulting glory that will accrue to God as we are made aware of how he works.

Let's begin by looking at some basic principles that must be understood in our day-to-day dealings with the devil.

1- Satan is real. He was a trusted angel before the fall as we see in Isaiah 14:12 and Luke 10:18. Since the fall, he has assumed the role of the adversary of God as we see in 1 Timothy 5:14. He has all of the attributes of a spirit being and possesses great intellect, reason and expression. He is not a vague essence of evil that cannot be defined. He is a real personality with a real set of objectives.

2- As the enemy of God, his goal is two-fold: a) to prevent unbelievers from coming to Christ (Luke. 8:12) and b) to render Christians ineffective (Luke. 22:31). He has thousands of tactics in accomplishing both, but today's lesson is designed to look primarily at his most devastating one.

3- Satan has access to God to accuse the believer (Job 1:12). As a spirit being, he is allowed to approach the throne of God and make accusations against the saints, thus allowing God to take the very tests Satan devises to destroy us and use them to transform us.

4- Satan roams the earth looking for Christians to destroy. I Peter 5:8 tells us that "Satan roams to and fro like a roaring lion, seeing whom he may devour". If you have ever seen a lion looking for lunch, it ought to be evident that it's not like taking a casual drive through the countryside hoping to find a Wendy's open. It's a calculated hunt. It is an aggressor stalking his prey, moving through the brush almost unnoticed until, at precisely the right moment, he springs through the air and captures the unsuspecting delicacy he longs for. That is the mindset of our enemy.

5- His ultimate destruction is a foredrawn conclusion in Scripture (Matthew 25:41). He and his demonic host will ultimately

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be totally defeated by the armies of God, and he will be banished first for a thousand years and then for an eternity of unending torment and punishment. He is a convicted criminal on death row awaiting execution. *At any time God chooses*, Satan's reign on earth is finished. The King will come in great splendor to crush the serpent beneath His feet. That's not a maybe. That's a must. The question is never "if" but "when."

6- The Scripture doesn't tell us to fight with Satan. "The battle is not ours, but God's" (II Chronicles 20:15). We are to "set ourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord". We are to "put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand" (Ephesians 6:11). And herein lies one of the great lies that Satan himself has sold to the church. He has attempted to make *us* the aggressors, stalking out the enemy, attacking the enemy and attempting to destroy the enemy. He loves it, for *once we go on the attack, Beloved, we are outside the will and authority of God, and the enemy has a field day.* Our God is able to deliver us! That is the key. "We have no need to fight this battle."

7- We are then, not to attack Satan, but to resist Satan. Peter writes:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Whom resist steadfast in the faith, (I Peter 5:8,9a)

We are told in Ephesians to "stand, and having done all to stand" (Ephesians 6:13). Ours is a defensive position and for a very good reason.

8- The way we resist the devil (and this is the key) is by crawling up into the arms of God. So we read in James 4:7

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you.

(James 4:7,8a)

You do not defeat Satan on the battlefield. God does. You do not defeat Satan, period. Your God defeats Satan when you make Jesus the total object of trust in your life. When you lay yourself at the feet of God for God to defend you, He becomes your rock, your shield and your salvation. When you *withdraw from His arms to do battle with the enemy on your own*, you launch out into enemy territory just asking to be defeated. "His is the Kingdom, His is the power, His is the glory." Therefore, Beloved, the battle is His and

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His alone. It may seem like only an issue of semantics, but it's not. It is an issue of authority.

9– Finally, the Scriptures clearly define that while resisting the devil involves drawing nigh unto God, drawing nigh unto God involves using His Word. When you lay up the Word in your heart and the enemy attacks, you simply must make a minute-by-minute choice whether or not to listen to what John 10:15 calls the voice of the stranger or to listen to the Word of the Living God. Which voice you listen to will determine whether or not you are resisting the devil. If the Word is laid up in your heart and *immediately upon attack* you turn to the Word, the devil flees. He cannot tolerate the Word of God. It is the only weapon listed in Ephesians 6 and the only weapon Jesus used in Matthew 4. The Word of God is the one thing Satan cannot cope with. Is it any wonder he fights so hard to keep man from the Word and the Word from man? And that is what today's lesson is all about.

We have been, you may remember, looking at Jesus' rather detailed explanation of His teaching ministry. He began by telling a simple story. Then He told the disciples why He told the story. He then proceeded to explain the story so that by that explanation, the disciples might come to understand not only that story, but all the stories He would tell for the rest of His stay on earth. So this paragraph may just be one of the most vital in all of Scripture.

He began by explaining the cast of characters and that the key element in the story was the Word of God. "The seed is the Word," He explained. Secondly, He explained that "the sower sows the Word." Your job and mine, as possessors of the living seed, would be to take that seed and carefully cast it into the various types of soil that we would encounter.

Now Jesus begins to explain what happens when we do that. And it is at this point that He introduces the second ingredient in the story. It is a person, characterized by a swooping bird, who, like a vulture, seeks to snatch away the seed before it can take root and produce a crop. He clearly tells us who that character is. First, the illustration in Matthew 13:

And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls (birds) came and devoured them up: (Matthew 13:4)

Then the explanation:

When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and

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catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that received seed by the wayside. (Matthew 13:19)

Our outline for this lesson is a very simple one:

I- The Illustration

II- The Explanation

III- The Assumptions

IV- The Application

### I- THE ILLUSTRATION

Jesus has very definitively drawn a word picture on the tablets of Scripture to illustrate one of the most widely overlooked principles in the church. The principle has to do with God's role, man's role and Satan's role in the process of appropriating the Word of God. It teaches, through the use of a parable, a story cast alongside, a simple story about recognizable, understandable experiences, that when interpreted by the Holy Spirit, reaches into the heart of God's child and etches indelibly into his or her heart a precept about the process of receiving Truth.

The illustration, of course, is a portrait of a farmer walking along the pathway, casting out seeds as he goes, with the specific intent of growing and harvesting a crop. As the farmer sows, however, it becomes immediately evident that not all of the seed is going to bear fruit. In fact, before long, it becomes evident that maybe not much of the seed is going to bear fruit. It finally, however, becomes evident that the key is that the seed that does take root is what matters, for those few seeds will multiply themselves, some as many as a hundredfold. So the farmer can live with the wasted seed, for the one who makes the seed to grow will see to it that the ones that fall on fertile soil will more than make up for the ones that are lost.

Jesus was obviously concerned about the seed that got away, however, for He dedicates this whole parable to explaining what happened. In fact, He draws word pictures of three distinct things that happen when seed is sown that are not good. Today's lesson deals with the first of those three. It is the story of the seed sown by the wayside. It is seed that falls by the side of the road where the soil is not yet ready to receive it.

### II- THE EXPLANATION

What makes this first illustration so powerful is the explanation that follows. We have already learned that the seed represents

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the Word of God, and the sower (that's us) has one basic function to fulfill. This function is to sow the seed in season and out of season. Our task is to continually sow the seed of the Word. But now there enters into the picture a second character. This is a very real character who is called simply "the wicked one" in Matthew. He is referred to in Mark as "Satan" and in Luke as "the devil." So we don't have to use our imagination to know who Jesus is referring to. He is referring to Satan. Jesus is very simply saying that whenever the Word goes forth, the enemy goes forth as well. In fact, the true meaning of the phrase is, "at the same time the sower is sowing, the birds are swooping." Satan is descending preparing to snatch it away lest it take root and bear spiritual fruit.

### III- THE ASSUMPTIONS

Jesus makes certain assumptions in His explanation that we must examine in some detail. For one of the most overlooked sources of instruction in the Word are things God simply assumes to be true. We have already seen this over and over in Jesus' ministry. The assumptions in this passage are powerful. Let's look at them:

1- Jesus assumes that we are sowing. He begins, "When he sowed" or "As he sowed." Jesus didn't waste precious time telling us to sow the seed. That was a foredrawn conclusion. The sower sows the Word.

2- Jesus assumes that some seed will fall by the wayside. It is obvious that the seed is valuable, and you do not simply cast it about the way you would throw something around that is useless. The passage on "casting pearls before swine," teaches us a great deal about the value of the Word in the presence of scoffers. This passage, however, teaches us much about the opposite side of the coin. It is an assumption that, when you sow the Word, not all of it will fall on fertile soil; and as you are sowing, you simply cannot tell. So many become discouraged as they teach and as they disciple and as they witness because they cannot see immediate fruit. Those they were just sure were fertile soil turn out not to have ears to hear. The temptation is to give up or to change fields. Be careful. It is a Scriptural assumption that some of the seed simply will not grow. One reason is that some of the seed will be snatched up by the enemy before it is ever appropriated.

3- The third assumption is that the birds will come; and the enemy, without fail, will be there as the seed is sown, and he will

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be after the seed so it cannot take root. Always the seed snatcher comes...always. If there is one thing Satan is, it's consistent. He is painfully consistent. His tactics do not vary a great deal; and sad to say, he seems to have great success doing the same things over and over. The seed snatcher comes. You can bank on it. As you sit today, listening to or reading the Word of God, the seed snatcher is waiting. It is not a possibility. It is an assumption.

4- There is one more assumption. It is assumed that some will not understand. The word "understand" used here literally means "to bring together after consideration." It means "knowledge thought through." You may recall that knowledge is nothing more than facts placed in the mind. Understanding is the personalization of those facts. Wisdom is the appropriation of those facts. Always, when the Word goes forth, some do not understand. Some do not grasp that the principles apply to them. There may be an intellectual assent to the information, but there is no personal responsibility or conviction involved. Thus, as Hebrews 4:2 so graphically describes, the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

So Jesus assumes four things before He begins.

- 1) He assumes the Word will be sown.
- 2) He assumes some will fall away by the wayside.
- 3) He assumes the enemy will be there waiting.
- 4) He assumes that some will hear everything said or everything read but simply will not understand.

The truth will not be mixed with faith in them. Thus, those four assumptions set the parameter for the story.

### IV- THE APPLICATION

So much for the illustration, the explanation and the assumptions. The question of questions still is this: "What is the application? How should or how would this portion of the parable affect the lives of the disciples and more to the point, how would it affect us?"

The first and perhaps primary application of the parable would have to do with evangelism. While the Matthew passage simply states:

When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.

(Matthew 13:19)

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The Mark passage says this:

And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

(Mark 4:15)

The Luke passage, however, goes on:

Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

(Luke 8:12)

Evangelism is more than preaching. Evangelism is more than teaching. Evangelism is more than witnessing. Evangelism is more than living the life. It is all of the above, but it is more, much more. Evangelism is praying. Evangelism is involvement. Evangelism is the process of sowing the seed then nurturing the seed, all the while protecting the seed by watching the sky as the enemy, like the birds of the air, swoops down into the heart of the one in whom the seed has been planted and takes away; literally takes away the seed of the Word. You've experienced it. You've shared Christ with a neighbor or a friend or a relative and seen conviction begin to descend. Awareness begins to take hold. You've seen what appears to be a receptiveness to the Gospel. They weren't ready to say, "Yes," to Christ, but they were ready to consider saying, "Yes." You went home rejoicing, praising God for what was happening. A little time passed, maybe only a day, maybe longer. Then you make contact again with your once receptive, near convert, only to your amazement to see no evidence of interest, no sensitivity to Truth, no openness to additional input from you. What happened? You sowed the Word. Then came the seed snatcher! He swooped down like a hawk, and the minute your back was turned, he snatched away the seed, and it never took root.

You may have been with someone at a graveside or in a hospital room who vowed, as you shared the Word, that from this time on, their life would be yielded to Christ. But two or three days later, there is no evidence of transformation, no hunger for the Word, no conviction of sin, no sensitivity to the Truth. What happened? They may have sincerely intended to be different but didn't fully grasp personally the reality of salvation, so the seed simply laid there at the edge of their heart waiting to gain entrance. And then the seed snatcher, like a vulture, descended and took away the seed of the Word so conversion never took place.

Understanding the truth of this parable, then, ought to affect

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our concept of the process that goes on in the heart of one who is searching for Truth. First of all, we must not assume they understood. The word “understood” remember, means to have personalized the truth. A man or woman may understand that Christ died for the sins of the world, but if he or she does not understand that He died for their sins, and that the responsibility is theirs to say yes or no to Him, the Word did not take root. The seed snatcher WILL come. Not might, will. Jesus guaranteed it. We must not assume that because a person demonstrated interest, they grasped truth. The two are not synonymous.

Secondly, we must not leave someone we consider to be a new convert to themselves. We mustn't “baptize ‘em and leave them on the banks to dry.” We wouldn't think of bringing a child into the world physically and then just leave them on a table somewhere while we go about the business of life, planning to check up on them in a day or two. There are too many enemies out there waiting to claim that newborn life. Why, then, are we so careless, so carefree about someone who prays to receive Christ? They may have not quite understood. They may be needing only a touch of encouragement or a question answered. If someone indicates to you a desire to receive Christ, you must either literally take them to raise for a season, or see that someone else does. Anything else is presumption. The seed may have gone forth, that's true, but then came the seed snatcher. The responsibility belongs to the spiritual parent to nurture and care for that spiritual infant and be sure that life really exists.

Thirdly, this parable ought to affect the way we receive the Word...in class, in church and in private. It ought to affect the way we respond to any new truth from the Word of God. Perhaps even today you have been convicted of some truth from the Scriptures. You know God was speaking to you. You have a choice. You can take the truth to the point of understanding, assigning a day this week or tomorrow to meditate on that passage, making yourself accountable to someone or to God to put into your life what God has spoken to you about, or to take out of your life the evil God has touched. You mean well. But you may return next week, hear the same truth, feel a similar conviction and wonder why you didn't do something about it. I'll tell you why. You heard the Word and considered it. You planned to turn it into understanding, but then came the seed snatcher. He took that Word that was lying there, just waiting to be magnetically drawn into your life, and he

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swooped down and snatched it up. It's gone. You'll have to plant it again, if you want it to grow.

When you get alone with God and open His Word, do you pray, "Lord, make this Truth come alive personally?" And when He does, do you stop and act on it? Or do you just assume that once you have taken in the seed, it simply has to bear fruit? You know it doesn't! Jesus just explained why. There's a seed snatcher out there whose aim in life is to watch and wait for the seed to be sown. Then, just as it begins to accomplish its intended purpose, he descends and he steals...and he leaves you with nothing to change your life.

That is why there is an assignment at the end of each of these lessons. If you and I don't take whatever it is we know God is dealing with us about and take a few days to meditate on it and work it into our lives practically, the seed snatcher will come and steal the seed. We mustn't let that happen.

So pray as you begin to study. Pray as the pastor begins to preach. Pray as the teacher begins to teach. Pray as that convert begins to respond. And pray, understanding the enemy, not fearing him, but understanding him. He is the seed snatcher. What he wants to do is take the Word from you before it ever accomplishes its intended goal. Pray, then, that God would envelop your heart with a cover of love and protect the seed until it sinks graciously into the soil of your heart. Pray then, that God would enable you to go immediately back to that field and begin watering that seed, nurturing that seed and encouraging that seed to grow.

You know what will happen? The angels in heaven will sing an anthem of praise. You know why? They will see what has happened. They will see that the Word went forth and lodged in your heart and then came the seed snatcher; but as the seed snatcher came, lo, the seed was nowhere to be found...for it was lodged forever in the depths of your heart. So the seed snatcher returned to the sky empty-handed, and the angels rejoiced as you went your way transformed by the power of the Living Word.

So take the Word into your heart  
And guard it then with care.  
For there is yet an enemy  
Who longs to enter there.

He longs to steal away the seed  
he rushes in, right to it...  
But you and I still hold the key  
We mustn't let him do it!

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An Assignment for Dealing with the Seed Snatcher

1- Do a study of the passages in the New Testament that mention the wiles or powers of Satan. Notice how often the Word merely mentions Satan's authority in order to draw attention to the greater authority of our God. Purpose in your heart not to give the enemy more attention than he is due.

2- Are we to attack Satan, or just resist Satan? If the latter is true, why do you think God did it that way? Can you draw any parallels from the Israelites in the Old Testament?

3- Have you been too selfish with the Word of God? Have you guarded the seed lest it fall by the wayside? How might understanding that God expects some to be wasted affect the way you share the Gospel?

4- Think back in your experience to the times you have shared the Gospel and seen an interest, then gone back and found the interest gone. Can you visualize the enemy snatching the seed? What might you do to prevent that from happening?

5- What do you think the church and we as individuals can do to protect those who are first trusting Christ as newborn babes? Can you suggest a plan to help implement your idea?

6- What have you learned in this lesson that needs to be turned into wisdom? How can you keep Satan from snatching the seed before it takes root? What do you plan to do about it?

7- Ask God this week to give you wisdom as to how to pray for settled seed in your heart. Ask Him to teach you how to approach the Word with such awe and with such a teachable spirit that the enemy simply is not welcome. Imagine the joy in heaven when the seed snatcher has nothing left to steal.

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