Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I remember the first time I saw Jesus get into a boat. My partners and I had just spent a night fishing, fishing to no avail, and I was sitting on the shore by my boat working on my nets. Jesus came along, edged along by a massive crowd of people. They were crowding him right to the edge of the water. He got into a boat that was there, happened to be my boat, looked at me and asked me to put out a little from shore. I did as he requested, as I sat there, I listened to what he was saying to the crowd even though it had been a long night and I was tired, physically, mentally, just plain tired.

When he was finished speaking, he looked at me and asked me to put into deep water and let down the net. It was pointless and I said "Master, we just spent the night fishing and didn't catch a thing," but I did as he directed. I put the net in, waited, then pulled it up. Well, I couldn't pull it up, it was so full of fish I thought we were going to capsize, I beckoned quickly for my partners to come and help. In all the years I fished, I'd never seen such a load of fish.

I fell to my knees and said "Away from me Master, for I am a sinful man." Jesus said "follow me." And I did. And I continue to follow him. You ask if I've ever looked back, well I don't think so. Oh, I suppose there were frustrations, still are. When I walked with Jesus, there was much he said that I simply couldn't/didn't understand. Some of it because of my limitations, some of it because I had expectations, even if I wasn't really sure what they were, of what the Messiah would be like. Jesus wasn't fitting into my image of the Christ even though I tried to get him to fit. Like the time he asked us who we said he was. I answered "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." He smiled and said this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in Heaven. That made me feel pretty good even though the answer came from the Father. Then he proceeded to talk about what was to come, his future, his death, and I told him we would not permit it, and he said "Get behind me Satan, you have in mind the ways of men, not of God." He was right, I was trying to fit him into a box of my own making.

I remember when he told us the parable you heard read a few minutes ago. The crowd was large, and once again he got into a boat and pulled out a little bit so he could talk to all who were there. I guess that's what got me remembering and sharing with you.

He talked about sowing, after he shared that parable, when we were alone with him we asked him why he talked in parables. Truthfully, we didn't understand much better than the crowd even though we had been with him. We would hear what he said, understand the words, and either try to fit them into our wants, our perceived needs, or at times we simply did not understand. We didn't really begin to get it until the day of Pentecost. But I was talking about Jesus' parable of the Sower.

Understand that the seed is the Word of God, the Good News, what we call the Gospel. My friend John quoted Jesus in his letter, but I remember when Jesus said: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life." When he said it, we didn't fully understand what he meant. But since Jesus' resurrection and ascension, well, now we know. That my friends is the seed, the seed from which springs our faith, as my brother in Christ Paul has said is what makes us righteous before God.

So we sow this seed of Good News and sometimes it falls on a hard-trodden path, where the heart of the hearer is hardened and unreceptive, unwilling to receive the gift Jesus brings us through faith. The seed, the Word, is snatched away, maybe the person hearing it simply knows better than to believe in myths and tales for children. For whatever reason that heart is unwilling.

Sometimes when we sow this seed the person who hears it is immediately receptive and wants to get involved and learn and do everything at once, including sharing it with others. Then perhaps they are received with ridicule, a simpleton who believes, persecuted in school or the workplace or even with friends or in the family. It may even be that the person who so quickly received the seed lives in a place where because of belief and sharing our faith, life is threatened. And the person who had received the Word with such joy falls away.

Then of course there are those who hear the Word of Jesus, but the things, the cares of the world choke the faith. It might be because the person who received the seed has made a conscious choice seduced by worldly things, or even that the person is overwhelmed with problems, illness, death of loved ones, loss of income and health. Jesus talked often about the love of money and how it can seduce one, that includes all the things that money buys, including power and prestige, it even conveys a false sense of security that many people treasure.

Then there is the good soil, the receptive heart, a heart prepared to receive the Word of God and let it flourish. In such a person the seed grows, nourished by the Sacraments and the Word, by community and sharing and it begins to produce a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold. In other words, it produces a lot and the thing is, a person may not even be aware how their life, the words, their actions and compassion, continually plant seeds in others.

Dear friends, by now you have probably figured out who I am, my name is Simon, Jesus gave me the name Peter as well, saying "On this rock I will build my church." There have been times when after I put my foot in my mouth, after I continually failed to understand, after my boasting, when I thought the rock might be in my head. But I know that's not what Jesus meant. Brothers and sisters in Christ, he used me and the rest of the disciples, sinful human beings every one of us, to build his church and now my friends, I want to you to help with the church that is Jesus' own body here in this place. AMEN