DAY 3
SEEDS WITH WINGS

“A sower went out to sow his seed . . .”
— Luke 8:5

As I was hiking with my sons one morning, we noticed a number of large trees dispersing their seeds in a most fascinating way. The seeds were pea-sized with a single leaf-like extension about the size and shape of a large dragonfly wing. Under the weight of the seedpod, the single angled wing would cause the seed to fall with the perfect twirling, rotating motion of a helicopter. The effect was like the “paper helicopters” some of us used to make in elementary school. The seeds whirled around us, slowly descending from the tall trees, and often getting caught up in the breeze to be carried far from the parent tree. It was a delightful sight.

Jesus tells about a sower who goes out to sow, scattering seeds left and right, near and far. Some of the seeds fall on rocky paths, some are scooped up by hungry birds, and some are choked by weeds. But some find fertile soil, take root, and a harvest comes forth beyond what any of us can imagine. He tells the parable to remind us of the way our faithful efforts make a difference in the lives of others around us.

Watching the “seeds with wings,” as my son called them, added a new dimension to Jesus’ parable of the seeds and soils. So much of our impact, even when we live immensely fruitful lives, affects those closest to us. We are like trees whose seeds fall directly to the ground beneath their own branches and under their own shade. We naturally have the greatest impact upon those closest at hand, our families, spouses, children, and grandchildren. We bear much fruit this way, but in a narrow and limited field. The branches of trees that drop their seeds directly beneath them protect their seedlings, filter sunlight for their good, and provide fallen leaves to nurture them. Among the most important seeds we sow are the grace and love of God we offer within our own families and among our own kindred. This is our calling.

Each of us has another and larger calling as well, and that is to give our seeds wings so that the good we do and the difference we make extend beyond our sight and beyond our time.

Each of us has been formed by the influences of countless people—friends, coworkers, mentors, teachers, coaches, neighbors, pastors, youth sponsors, scout leaders, colleagues, confidants—who have contributed far beyond their own small circles. Through their generosity, time, effort, and love, they have changed us, and changed the world, by intentionally providing a legacy that extends far and wide.

I’m often amazed at the immeasurable difference people make with their lives far away from their homes and long after their deaths. In Honduras, I’ll see a clinic started by a Sunday school class from a church in Oklahoma many years ago. In an African village, I’ll see kids nestled under mosquito nets funded by youth from a church in Germany. In an American church, I see prayer cloths handmade by Christians in Korea. In nursing homes, I see birthday cards made by five year olds, and in church nurseries I find blankets knitted by the elderly homebound.

There is no end to what God can accomplish anywhere in the world when our “seeds have wings”; when we are willing to let our prayers, intentions, plans, efforts, and work be lifted by the Spirit to places far away; when our generosity moves beyond ourselves.

• Think of two or three of the most influential people in forming your own soul and character other than your relatives. What made them effective? What can you learn from their generosity and the legacy they have left for others?
• Where in the world beyond your own church and home are there signs of your congregation’s ministry? Of your own?