

If It Dies
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Opening: Who are the “green thumbs” in this group? What do you like to grow? Who dreams of having a green thumb?

It can be dangerous to go to Home Depot or Lowes if you're not handy. As you peruse the tools and materials you start imagining what you can build or do. It's the same when I stand before the seed display. I start imagining what I can grow and I can almost smell and taste those pictures on the packets.

What if you were at my house and I said, “*Would you like to see my sunflowers and poppies? How about my corn, tomatoes, etc.?*” Then, instead of taking you to my garden, I pulled out colorful seed packets. What if instead of real fruit I was bragging about my seed collection; bragging on and clinging to unplanted seeds?

In today's text Jesus used the very obvious example of a seed being planted in the soil as a mini-parable illustrating that life only comes by death. He was talking about his own imminent crucifixion and resurrection, but he was also talking about how His followers must die spiritually so we can live eternally.

The point: Eternal life for all people only became possible because Jesus died and rose from the dead like a seed coming up from the earth and multiplying. That same concept illustrates the only way we can be followers of Christ. We must die to sin and self so we can be raised to new life with Jesus. Otherwise, we are just unplanted seeds that bear no fruit for Him.

Here's a little context before the text:

- After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees ratcheted up their plot to kill Him (11:53.)
- Knowing things were coming to a head, Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Passover riding on a donkey as the crowd cheered His Triumphal Entry.
- Their definition of triumph and God the Father's plan were not the same.
- Jesus cleansed the temple of moneychangers a second time, and then He was approached by some Gentiles. John doesn't tell us what they wanted to ask Jesus, He just went directly to Jesus' reply:

John 12:23–33 (ESV) — 23 And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [Now jump ahead to verse 27] **27** “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” **29** The crowd that stood there and heard it

said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” **30** Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. **31** Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” **33** He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

- Over and over Jesus said his “hour” of death had not come. Now it had.
- Instead of, “crucified,” He said, “glorified.” Everything Jesus had done on earth was to glorify God, and His death would be the ultimate glorification.
- Verse 27 is another display of both Jesus’ humanity (troubled in soul) and divinity (“...for this purpose I have come...Father glorify your name.”)
- Satan, the “ruler of this world” could only be “cast out” if Jesus, the sinless Son of God was planted like a grain of wheat in death, to emerge three days later as the “first fruits” of resurrection to defeat death and hell for all.
- Jesus had to be “lifted up” on a cross to “draw all people” to Himself.
- **1 Peter 3:18 (ESV) — 18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,
- The sinless Son of God was the only perfect seed that could produce the fruit of forgiveness of sin for all people.
- Jesus speaking about a seed being planted wasn’t only an illustration of His death as our sacrifice; it applies to those who are drawn to follow Him.
- Let’s put the verses back in order.

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

[A seed must die so it can multiply, then Jesus immediately said:]

25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

- He was saying His followers are also seeds that must die and be planted. Let’s look at two ways His followers are seeds that must be planted.
- Those words, “love your life and lose it” are recorded in all four gospels.
- In Matthew’s gospel right before those words, he quoted Jesus: “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*” **Matthew 16:24 (ESV)**
- The cross is a symbol of death. How is trusting Christ like death for us?
- **Galatians 2:20 (ESV) —** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- **Romans 6:4 (ESV) — 4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
- A follower of Christ must “die” and be planted like a seed when we repent of our sin and trust Him as Savior and Lord. That’s the seed of salvation.
- Now, let’s talk about the seed of sanctification.

- Back to verse 25: *“Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”*
- Earlier in John we read that Jesus said He came to give us “abundant life” starting this side of heaven, yet He said we must “hate” life in this world. Which is it? Why would He use the word “hate” referring to earthly life?
- **Matthew 10:37 (ESV)** Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. [Note the words, “more than me.”]
- Back to verse 25, the word for “hate” in means to “love less.”
- A follower of Christ must not love anything or anyone more than Him.
- **Luke 9:23 (ESV) — 23** And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
- Again, this is the concept of “dying to self” but note the word, “daily.”
- The seed of salvation is planted once for all time (I can’t “unsave” myself) but the seed of “dying to self” must be planted daily (sanctification.)
- A farmer must plant the crops in season or there will be no crop until next year. For a follower of Christ, every day is a new planting season.
- Imagine every morning when a Christ-follower wakes up, Jesus has given us new packets of seeds we can plant to glorify Him. We have a choice: Will we die to self and put Him first or cling to packets of unplanted seeds?
- If I’m a Christ follower, how can I spot unplanted seeds in my life?
 - When God’s word says, “do” and I don’t or says, “don’t” and I do (clear commands of scripture) it’s an unplanted seed.
 - When God’s word offers wise guidance for living (i.e. wisdom in Proverbs) and I say, *“I have a better plan,”* it’s an unplanted seed.
 - When God’s Spirit nudges me in an unmistakable way and I say, *“I’d rather not do that.”* There’s another unplanted seed.
 - When something or someone becomes more important to me than serving Christ and I say, *“I can’t live without it or him or her.”* Unplanted seed.
 - When those who despise Christ say, *“Are you one of them?”* If I, like Peter in the courtyard, respond, *“I don’t even know that man!”* Definitely an unplanted seed or perhaps that seed of salvation hasn’t been planted at all.
- Trusting Christ and dying to self means putting our lives (seeds) totally in the hands of the Master Gardener so He can use us and be glorified.
- Dying to self daily means every day of my life is a seed and I can either leave it in the packet or obediently entrust it to the Master Gardener.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- “Loving our life and losing it,” is caring more about our earthly life than serving God. Christ calls us to die to self so we can enjoy life with Him.
- Our souls are seeds to be planted by trusting Christ as Savior and Lord.
- Our days are seeds to be surrendered to the Master Gardener for His glory.

- In Pastor Jeremy's "Reset" podcast this week he talked about that word "daily" in Luke 9:23. He said, *"This is not always easy. Many days I lack motivation. Many days my quiet time feels like a dud. Many seasons...feel dry, powerless, and ineffective. The key is persistence and discipline. Jesus is not just a Master that I serve; He's a friend to my heart. Christianity isn't just rules we follow, it's a relationship we enjoy. "Daily," what a helpful word. Did you blow it yesterday? Many of us did. We have a "reset" today. Let us daily pick up our cross...[and] live for Jesus."*
- Jesus words in verse 26 of John 12 are both a command and a promise: *"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."*
- This week let's don't cling to unplanted seeds. Let's hand the seeds of our life to the Master Gardener so we can enjoy the fruit He promises.