

Acts 14:1-28 - Bair

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Preacher: Daniel Bair

[0:00] Well, I want to start with a question this morning. What is a sermon? It's a good question to ask as we are preaching through Acts.

! We're preaching sermons on sermons. It's an interesting thing to do. But what is a sermon? And maybe a better question to ask is, what is a good sermon? Most of you have heard me enough to get a good idea what a good sermon is.

Okay, but no, what is a good sermon? I don't have the perfect answer to that, obviously. Some of us go to training for years to learn how to preach, how to write a sermon, how to deliver a sermon.

What is a good sermon? Well, today we have a few sermons in Acts that look like they're not so good sermons. This is Paul, so are they good sermons or are they not?

Well, we'll dig into that a little bit. I would suggest, I heard that, a rumor that of all the pastors here, I'm the one most likely to use an illustration, a visible illustration, so I'm going to do that today.

[1:02] I think, I grabbed these seeds, good sound effect here. I think a sermon is sowing seeds, sowing the seed, the seed of the word.

And that's what we're going to see here in Paul's sermons today, and hopefully in this sermon we'll hear some of that. But sowing a seed, if you were to drive 40 minutes west of here in the middle of May and you look out at the farmlands, you see mud to the horizons.

Nothing but gray stubble, nothing green shooting up. And if you were to use your eyes to judge that farmland, you would say, you would weep for the farmer.

There's nothing here. But the farmer's not weeping because he knows the seed is planted. He knows the seed is doing its job, it's growing. You just don't see it yet. And he knows October is on the calendar, it's coming up.

So he's prepared for that. Maybe to put it another way, if you've ever helped a small child plant a seed, they're very excited about this.

[2:05] They have this little seed in a cup. What do they do the next morning? They go dig it up to see if it's growing yet. And you have to train them that the fastest way to kill a seed is to not leave it buried.

Okay, so that's one side of the message this morning. There's the stream running through this. The other side is when we look at the seed and we don't see a crowd gathering to hear it, we're tempted to dress it up.

We're tempted to throw some sparkles on it, some garland, something to make it attractive to the crowds. And so we have a parade that we call a harvest. Under both of these is that stream of doubt, of fear that the seed has lost its germ.

The seed is no longer effective. It's impotent. It's lost its power. And I think in part, Acts 14 is written to bury that fear. Acts 14, we see some sermons from Paul.

Last week, two weeks ago, we looked at chapter 13 where the Spirit says, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul. And then last week we read, I have made you a light for the Gentiles in chapter 13.

[3:23] And we're invited to step into this big story that's going on. And so 14, chapter 14 is this story underfoot. Two men in four cities, nothing in their hands but this message, the seed that they're throwing out to plant in these places.

And as they deliver the message, it looks like the sermon is dying. It looks like a bad sermon. But when the dust settles, we have churches and elders in all four towns.

So if I were to summarize this sermon in one point, I would say it this way. God plants his word through what looks like defeat. God plants his word through what looks like defeat.

Because on the missional front this morning in Acts 14, everything is not hunky-dory. Do we use that phrase, hunky-dory? It doesn't look great this morning.

The word's chased out. The preachers are ignored or worshiped. The missionary is stoned. The word looks like it's failing, but it's not failing, it's falling.

[4:32] The way seed falls. So if you were to carry three lines out of this text this morning, I would say, first, false gods are empty. Second, the true and living God fills.

And third, the measure is never what our eyes can see. Falling is not failing. Buried is not beaten. Sown is not stopped. It looks the opposite of what it is.

And it's not optimism. This is theology. This is the theology that Pastor Dave started with us on week one. That the church, the victory of God sometimes looks like weakness.

But it's not. And that's all, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians, to show the surpassing power belongs to God, not to us. The power is not in the soil. It's not in the sower.

It's in the seed, the living word of God. So four stops on this map. Iconium, Lystra, Derby, and then the long road home. But let's pray one more time before we jump in.

[5:33] Heavenly Fathers, we come to your word this morning. We know it's your Holy Spirit that causes the growth. So would you plant the seed of your word deep in our hearts.

Allow it to grow and blossom into fruit for your glory. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Iconium. Chapter 14, verses 1 through 7.

This is a, it starts the same way Pastor Godoy's sermon started two weeks ago, where they enter, this is the playbook for the missionaries.

They enter the synagogue, they start with the Jewish scriptures, and preach a sermon. And here the sermon works. Look at verse 1. They spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.

A great number. If our story ended here, we could close our books, count the numbers, go home and celebrate. Oh, but it doesn't. We have verse 2. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

[6:45] Poisoned. The word undermines, this is an important Greek word. The word is psuche. It's the same word for soul or self, mind. It's all this kind of combined together.

And we need to hold on to that word because Luke isn't done with it. We'll come back to that near the end. But I think one point here that we want to notice is that there are two farmers at work here in this field.

There's one sowing and one poisoning. One sowing and one poisoning. And that's always the case. And in the rows you're sitting in this morning, there's a farmer sowing and a farmer poisoning.

But then we have verse 3, which we have this tiny defiant word. So, so they packed their bags and left? No. So they remained for a long time speaking boldly for the Lord.

They remained. The plot rises. So they stay longer and louder. Longer and louder. The opposition for an apostle is not an escape.

[7:46] It's not an exit. It's an invitation. And it's the Lord who does the work. We see that in verse 3. The Lord who bore witness to the word of his grace.

They're just faithfully sowing the seeds. The Lord bears the witness. And here we read in verse 4 that the soil does what it, the seed does what it does in real soil.

The people are divided. The people of the city are divided. Jesus told us this would happen. He promised division. The word planted divides.

And so there's this plot arises where they're going to mistreat these preachers. They're going to stone them. So they don't stand to take it. They flee. It's interesting.

They run. Look at verse 6. They fled to Lystra and Derbe. I think we can write that verse over our discouragement. The apostles fled. They fled.

[8:48] But what did they run with? Verse 7 tells us, And there they continued to preach the gospel. They don't run away. They run to something else. They run to another place. They've started. They've planted seeds here.

They can't be stopped. So they have to keep going. When the opposition rises, they flee to the next place with a seed bag over their shoulders, ready to sow more seeds. Persecution never stops the sowing.

It scatters it. It scatters the seed. We saw that in chapter 8. Those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Falling is not failing. Perhaps before we move on to the next section, someone

in this room was chased out this week.

Perhaps there's a co-worker that you've constantly shared the gospel with, but they've politely or otherwise closed the door in your face. Maybe there's a family member you've been praying for. Maybe a text message unanswered. And as you leave that situation, driving home on the dashboard of your spiritual journey, the word failure, failure flashes. Failure.

[9:57] But that's not ours to decide. Luke doesn't ask what the result was. He asks if the seed left your hand. Are you sowing the seed? If you have, the seed is in the ground.

And there, it belongs to God. And while you're reading failure, the ledger of heaven says, seeds planted. Fields ready for harvest eventually in God's timing.

And so we move, we move on to Lystra. Lystra is different. No synagogue, no scriptures, no Sabbath, no shared vocabulary.

And so, so we have open air preaching to pure pagans, the first of its kind in Acts. And in this, in this crowd sits a crippled man.

A crippled man. Read this in verse, in verse eight. He was, there's a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked.

[11:00] They want us to know this guy. He was like, he's not, he's never, very clear here. You can't, you can't miss this. This guy's never walked. He's crippled from birth. Okay, we get it. Why?

Well, it's important. First, look, Paul sees him. And verse nine tells us, he listened to Paul speaking. Before the word reaches his feet, it reaches his ears and his heart.

And Paul looking at him, he sees something. Paul looking intently at him, seeing that he had faith to be made well. I have a footnote here in my Bible. Maybe you do too. What does that mean? Faith to be saved.

It's the same Greek word. Saved and made well. I think that, I think that word is actually serving both purposes here for Luke. This man has faith to be saved and faith to be healed.

And so, and so Paul says, in a loud voice, he says, stand upright on your feet. Stand upright on your feet.

[12:00] To the man who had never walked. So he stumbles to his feet. No, he springs up like a spring chicken. I don't know if chicken spring. A spring rabbit. He's up and moving.

What a miraculous healing. Maybe you remember back a couple weeks ago at the beginning of chapter 13. We had this man that was made blind so that the procouncil's eyes were opened and believed.

Here we have an even greater miracle of a healing. So all these people, they've got to believe the message of these preachers. I mean, you can't deny the miracle. It's amazing.

So what happens? Well, the crowd erupts in Lyconian, this mountain tongue that the apostles don't know. They don't understand.

And they say, the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men. We've got, we've got Zeus and Hermes here doing these miracles. Well, that's kind of weird.

[13:02] Isn't it? Why would they, why would they think this? We think, well, okay, it's got to be some gods in their minds. But no, it's a little deeper than that because there's an ancient story in this land about Zeus and Hermes.

Zeus is also Jupiter, if you know your Greek Roman gods. I know many of the young ones here know this. Jupiter is also called Jove. That's like his nickname. Okay, so, so, so you have Zeus and Hermes came to this town disguised as men.

Okay, well, that's kind of what's going on here. We've got two guys here that are, I mean, obviously more than men. A few decades before this incident recorded for us in Acts, the, the poet Ovid wrote in his book Metamorphoses, he wrote a poem about this incident at Lystra or in this area.

This is, this is like the, the fairy tales the kids here grew up on. Listen, listen to what Ovid says. Here Jove, that's Zeus, with Hermes came, but in disguise of mortal men concealed their deities.

When laid aside, his thunder won his rod and many toilsome steps together trod. For harbor at a thousand doors they knocked, not one of all the thousand but was locked. At last, an hospitable house they found, a homely shed, the roof not far from ground, was thatched with reed and straw together bound.

[14:29] They find this, it's a long poem, I'm not going to read the whole thing. They find this, this little dingy hut with two old people inside and they finally get refuge after knocking on a thousand doors.

Okay, so these, these gods are, are rightly angry at the rest of the town and so what do they do? They wipe out the whole town with a flood. Kill everyone except these two and then these two are like weeping for their lost neighborhood and neighbors.

It's an interesting story but this is, it's more than a story, this is, this is their story, this is their history. And so you have two guys come into town and they heal this guy that's born, guys the gods are amongst us again.

If you miss the gods but once, you lose everything. Feed the gods lest they kill you. Guys, they're not, they're not being silly here, they're being scared.

Every pagan on altar, every pagan altar on earth is a protection payment. And so of course the priests of Zeus come out catering this, this meal, this meal of oxen to the gates and garlands to crown the gods.

[15 : 45] And so at this point the, the apostles see what's going on and, and now their eyes tell them what their ears couldn't interpret earlier. They're coming to worship us.

We can't have this. And so what do they do in verse 14? They tear their garments and rush out into the crowd. That's like a very Jewish thing to do. Tear your garments at, at this blasphemy. The true servants of the true God cannot receive praise that belongs to him.

We saw this earlier with Peter in Caesarea. He says, stand up, I too am a man. Refusing to receive the glory that belongs to God. And then, and then we have Paul preaching the shortest missionary sermon in Acts without any scripture in it.

Usually his, his sermons are full of scripture, but, but he's talking to a pagan people and so he speaks on their eye level. We, we also are men like you, verse 15. And then we have this command, the only command in the speech, turn, turn from these vain things to a living God. Vain things. That's, that's, the Old Testament's nickname for idols. Empties. Turn from these empties. An idol is an empty.

[17 : 02] It can take your ox, but it can never fill your heart. We actually, we actually sang the counter song this morning. In you alone, we live and move and have our being in your love.

We have our being, our existence in God. These idols, these empties well, they can take your stuff, but they can't give you anything. And then in the sermon, he, Paul pulls on their, on their history and, and the witness God has given throughout history.

He says, he did not leave himself without witness for he did good. That's an interesting phrase. He did good. That's, that's usually attributed to Zeus in this area.

He's the, the good doer, not the do-gooder, the good doer to the people. That's Zeus. And, and Paul says, no, no, no, that's God. He did good to you by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

In Iconium, the first story, he bore witness, God bore witness to the truth of his, of his message by the gospel. Here in Lystra, he, he bears witness to who he is by the rains.

[18 : 22] But this is why we need missionaries because even though every rain is a sermon, every glad supper is a witness stand, you can't get to the message of the gospel without someone to deliver it.

The rains say, yes, there's a God who provides. The missionaries are the ones who say who it is. And so Paul says, your rain was never Zeus. it was the God of the Old Testament.

And then this word satisfying your hearts, filling full. This is what Mary, Luke began his gospel with this song of Mary. She sings this, he has filled the hungry with good things.

Our gospel reading showed it in Matthew 14. The Lord takes these loaves and breaks them and feeds 5,000 until they ate and were satisfied.

This is the whole contest here. False gods are empty. The true and living God is the one who satisfies, who fills his people.

[19 : 28] And the measure is never what our eyes can see. Okay, so did Paul's sermon work? Look at verse 18. Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

Okay, his sermon works scarcely. I don't know, I take that as an encouragement as a preacher. His sermon barely works. Two apostles, one miracle and a sermon and it scarcely stops this parade of worshipping them.

The seed does not ask for garlands, it asks for ground. Sow the seed. Reject the praise. And then we move to verses 19 and 20.

In 19, we're told the Jews came from Antioch and Iconium. Now, I don't know how good your geography of Israel is. Let me start with this.

Titus and I, and most of you know weren't here last week, we were out backpacking in the upper peninsula of Michigan. It was great. We, for the fun of it, hiked 15 miles in the backwoods of northern Michigan.

[20:46] It was fun. It was exhilarating. It was exhausting. How far is Antioch from Lystra? 100 miles. Guys, they didn't drive it.

They went and bought sandals to fuel their hatred. They went and bought sandals for this 100 mile hike to come, verse 19 tells us, persuade the crowds.

The same crowds. Monday, we're saying, the gods have come amongst us. Friday, we're saying, well, Friday, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

Garlands in the morning, gravel in the afternoon. The same hands throw them both. And Luke doesn't really slow down to explain it. But who's this, who's this man under the stones?

Interesting. Paul, he'd been out stonings before. Well, he'd been on the other side of stonings before. He stood and held the coats and approved of those who stoned Stephen.

[21:58] And now the tables have turned and these, these his kinsmen have traveled 100 miles to kill him. How do you feel about someone who does that to you?

How does Paul feel toward these, his kinsmen who did this? We read it earlier, didn't we, in Romans 9. Paul says, he feels great sorrow and unceasing anguish for these brothers.

He could wish himself accursed in their place. The man they supposed dead, supposed dying for them worth it.

It's an interesting turn for Paul, for us to contemplate. I think the lesson of this section is living for approval, living for the garland, living for the praise of others is worshiping an empty God.

We see how it works because the empty gods will never fulfill. Eventually, the same crowd will turn. But more than that, we sang, riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise because our desire is not empty praise.

[23:17] Our desire is that we praise the living God. So don't live for the crowd's crown, don't preach for it, don't parent for it, don't post for it, whatever you're doing. A heart that will not worship the living God will worship something and that something will be an empty.

But here, the stoners leave Paul outside the wall. And we have this quiet wonder in the chapter, verse 20, but when the disciples, wait a second, the disciples, who are the disciples?

They're new converts, they're fresh disciples in the church. When the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city. Very, very, just nonchalant recorded here.

They supposed him dead, but he rose up and entered the city. Do you know who's from Lystra? A young man?

Maybe a young man who was standing here in this circle around Paul? A young man to whom Paul will write a letter later and say, you followed my persecutions and sufferings at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra?

[24:40] Timothy? Timothy could have been a boy who watched this whole scene and gave his whole life to that message. I don't think we think about this, but our endurance might be someone's seminary.

Students, this is for you. It's not a kid's menu. Sorry. The first fruit of this stone sermon is a young man, Timothy, somebody your age.

The deep things are not for later. The word gets up outside the wall and the church is born in Lystra. Are there Timothys here?

Timotheas? I don't know. Think about that. But what does Paul do? He rose up and entered the city. He enters the city that stoned him.

Gets up off his burial ground, walks back through the same gate they dragged him out. I wonder, I often picture how does he get up? Does he leap up like the guy he healed completely back to normal or does he limp like Jacob in our Genesis story?

[25:57] Is he limping back into the town? I don't know. He counts this though. He tells of the times he was stoned. He recounts these stories. Blessed and bruised are co-travelers on this journey of evangelism.

The marks are not disqualification. The marks are the planting record of the message. Buried is not beaten. Perhaps some of you feel that way.

Some of you feel like you're outside of a city lying on the ground dragged out by perhaps those who once praised you, applauded you. What do we do in that situation?

Well, the church gathers around in a circle. Verse 20, get back up, get in. But perhaps the harder thing, Pastor Tad pointed this out in chapter 12, he wouldn't let us look away from the hard part. The God who walked Peter past the guards, you remember this? That same God let James fall under the sword. Paul gets up in verse 20.

[27:06] Stephen did not. James did not. Some sorrows get no, verse 20. They arrive without warning, they leave without explanation.

Nobody hands you a why. Luke, Luke doesn't deal in whys. He deals in who and when.

In our responsive reading this morning, we prayed, when I awake, I shall be satisfied. satisfied.

There's that word again, satisfied, filled with your likeness. This filling outlasts every field.

It's what lets us sing, blessed be the name of the Lord. Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, praise the Lord. Not because the hurting stops, but because he is good, because he's in the dark, and because the dark is not the end.

Okay, well, let's move on to Derby. Derby gets one verse. It's great. Yay, Derby. And it's kind of the quietest in the chapter.

[28:19] Verse 21, they preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples. No riots, no stones, no recorded miracles.

and the biggest harvest of the whole journey. That should be on our coffee mugs, right? This verse. They preached the gospel, many converts were made, the end.

Great. That's a Bible verse to post on your fridge. Many disciples made. God works off camera.

God does his deepest, greatest works off camera. The miracle, this healing that should have been like, wow, this is going to be revival, did not bring the revival.

The revival came in the quiet Derby town. And then they, this is interesting, in verse 21, they return to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch.

[29:21] Why would you go back there? Why would you go back to the places that stoned you or were trying to stone you? back through the stoning grounds. There are other routes you could have taken.

But they go back, verse 22 tells us, to strengthen the souls of the disciples. There's our bookend. The souls, the psuche of the disciples.

Verse two, there's a poisoner poisoning the souls. Verse 22, there's the apostles strengthening the souls. Two farmers work the field.

And that's one reason we gather every seven days. Our souls leak. The poisoners at work throughout the week, we have to come together to encourage and strengthen one another.

And we need to have these pep talks, right? Listen to Paul's pep talk. Through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.

[30:25] God, thanks Paul, through many tribulations, we must. That's a word Luke likes to use for the unbendable plan of God.

We must. That's the same the Lord used on the Maus Road. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

Mustn't the Christ suffer? Yes. suffering first, glory after. And the disciples follow the same road. There's no private detour.

And this is the follow-up program for recent converts. They're like a week-old converts. It's like, okay, welcome to the church, you're going to suffer. The old commentator said it in four words, no cross, no crown.

No cross, no crown. Tribulation's not an interruption to the Christian life. It's the climate the crop was bred for.

[31:30] And when it finds you, you've not wandered off the way. This is the way. Walk in it. That signpost hasn't come down.

This very hour, there are sowers in the same Lystra towns around the world, sowing seed for harvest, facing the stones of opposition.

Again, Paul to Timothy says, when he's in chains, the word of God is not bound. Timothy. Bind the sower, the seeds keep traveling.

Our job, if we're not in that position, is to pray for the sowers who are. Pray for those you can see, pray for those who you can't. Gather around them in prayer.

As Paul travels through these towns, he also tells us in verse 23, they appointed elders in every church with prayer and fasting. Elders and churches weeks old, in towns that had stoned the founder.

[32:48] Guys, you don't drive fence posts into fields you're going to abandon. Paul is establishing churches here, structured with the orderly gift of the spirit, and they fasted and leave.

And they leave the field in the hands of the locals who have received the word. Lord. And then home to Antioch, verse 26, where they had been commended, we saw that a couple weeks ago, to the grace of God for the work they had now fulfilled.

Wait, they had fulfilled? Interesting. Chased out, fulfilled. Rejected, fulfilled. Crowned kings, crowned gods, fulfilled.

Stoned, fulfilled. Because those were what the world saw. But the record in heaven was the faithful planting of the seed.

Listen to the grammar in the report. They declared all that God had done, and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.

[33:58] Oh, come on, it'd be easy to say at this point, I was stoned, but I got up, and I went back in, and I preached, and look at me, I'm a preacher. No, this is what God had done. God is the subject of every verb.

The last line here is a mercy for the travelers. They remained no little time with the disciples. They need to rejuvenate it.

Even sower's rest. The seed sprouts and grows, the farmer doesn't know how. The fields grow while the farmers sleep. We're nearly halfway through this book of Acts.

There's churches in all these cities. There's elders established. There's a door open to the nations, planted by these two preachers. years. I wonder if the dashboard on their drive away from these towns lit up failure, failure.

But it wasn't. Because the word of God increased and multiplied. That's the theme of Acts. The word of God increased and multiplied.

[35:12] Increased. Increased is a farmer's word. It grew. It flourished. It's not defeat. It's increase.

Okay, so let's stand back and let's see the bigger picture, the pattern here. They dragged the preacher outside of the city, supposing him dead, and he got up.

Does that remind us of something? We've heard this story before. Outside another city on a Friday. Well, they didn't suppose him dead. They made sure.

They made spear sure. They made tomb sure. They made seal and soldiers sure. He was dead.

The eternal word of God went into the ground, a seed, and sprung up that Sunday morning.

Under this whole chapter runs that promise, and the promise of Isaiah, that my word that goes forth from my mouth shall not return empty. Empty. It's not an empty, but shall accomplish that which I purpose.

[36:23] The idols are empty, as the word of God is not. It cannot be empty. It cannot return empty. The only blessed empty in the heavens account that I can think of is the tomb.

The idols are empty because they were never alive. The tomb is empty because the Christ could not stay dead. So what do we do with this word?

Three handles, I think small enough to carry home. First, so anyway. So anyway. Put down the shovel, don't dig it back up.

What's your list run? Maybe it's a child, a wayward child. Maybe it's an extended family member. Maybe it's a co-worker, someone who's heard it a thousand times.

Maybe it's someone you've been praying for for 20 years. Our job is just to sow the seed, not to count the harvest. Sow the seed.

[37:29] Second, refuse the praise, refuse the garlands. Maybe this is important for a church to think about. the moment we start decorating oxen or measuring the word's effectiveness by the size of the parade, we've traded the seed bag for a festival.

Preach the word. Tear the robes if they want to crown the messenger. Let the Lord bear witness to his grace. It's what he loves to do.

God doesn't need a marketing team. he needs faithful, honest farmers. Third, I think be the circle. Be the ones that circle up around those who are hurting, who are struggling, who are stoned in the work, who are discouraged, who are worn out.

Gather around. Maybe you can't see the person. You can pray for them. Maybe you can't see them. Maybe they need a word of encouragement, a meal.

Do what you can. Circle the person in prayer by name when you can and groans when you cannot. The word of God is falling around the world right now.

[38 : 52] From this church, at hospital beds, missionaries around the world. Sometimes it will be chased out. Sometimes it will be crowned or worshipped wrong.

Sometimes it will be stoned. And left for dead. Our job is not to make it grow. Our job is to be faithful, to either sow it or shelve it. So sow it.

Let the world hear. In a few minutes we come to the table, taste and see the Lord is good, to be satisfied in the promises of God.

And then as Dan shared a couple weeks ago, the sermon ends with these three little words that are not class dismissed. It's go. Go sow.

And actually in a moment we'll sing the song Hallelujah all I have is Christ. Hallelujah Jesus is my life. I think Paul would have loved that song.

[39 : 53] He would have been singing that as he's stoned outside the town. As he gets up and goes back in. All I have is Christ and that's all I need. So sing that as we sing that. Sing it in a way a man supposed dead gets up.

Sing it over the false praise you've rejected, you've not received, or the stones that have come your way. Sing it for sowers and fields who cannot sing aloud this morning.

Let's sing that, let's go, and sow together. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that in all our efforts to share the good news of the gospel, we would be faithful sowers, not counting numbers, but trusting you to do the work, you to cause the growth, and just being faithful in what you've called us to do.

We pray in Christ's name, amen.