

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." – 2 Corinthians 5:20

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Scattering Seeds

The parable of the sower has been on my mind a lot recently. Maybe it's because of the change in weather, the beautiful blooms, our new mini porch garden, or the seasonal allergies I'm enduring. Oh, this broken world! :-) But more than anything, I believe God has been drawing me back to this parable because of the variety of relationships that we've built and the uncertainty that comes with each one. God is the harvester, and we are not.

Take, for example, a young mom who was excitedly coming to church for several months. Then a sharp and sudden departure. Or another young mom who we've worked with for a long time and seemed to be ever-inching closer to the Lord, whose appetite was wet, and who was excited to learn about the Bible and the story of the woman who anointed Jesus. But who now decided to move in with her boyfriend and is slowly seeking more community with him and his unbelieving family. She is still a beloved part of our lives, but comes around a lot less often, is no longer coming to church, and isn't interested in studying the Bible. Or there's the gentleman that Derek has continually tried reaching out to because they initially got along so well over their love of Belgian things, but who now isn't able to make the time. Or our neighbors who all enthusiastically joined our Neighbors WhatsApp group with the promise of game nights and hanging out, who have never once accepted our invitations over the past year. It is actually really hard to build and maintain relationships with people and tell them about Jesus here in this culture. Hard soil. Birds. Thorns. It can feel really discouraging sometimes.

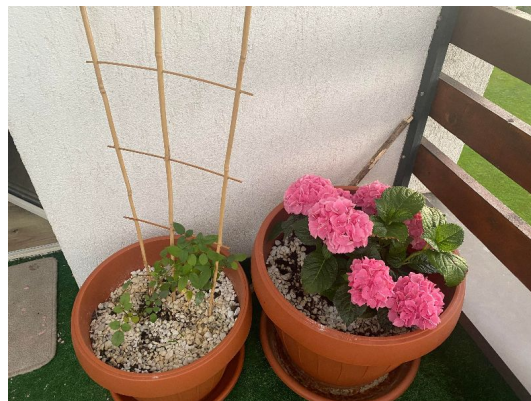
But then, there are others who bring new hope. Like the mother and two children who began coming to church months ago because of her daughter's

involvement in Kids Club. After months, they finally asked why we don't make the sign of the cross on our chests during our services or as we walk past a church. Our pastor explained that, while there is nothing inherently wrong in doing so, especially if you're doing it out of respect for Jesus, many Romanians use it sort of like a good luck charm. As she considered this, she finally responded with, "You know, that's right. I've always done that so that God would protect or bless me, and I thought that if I failed to do it when walking past a church that He would be mad." We have since gotten together, opened the Bible to John 14:12, where she was asking about what clearly seemed to be a problematic passage - when Jesus says that we can ask ANYTHING in His name, and He'll give it to us. I showed her how to back up a chapter and read the context of the whole story to realize that the "anything" He's talking about are the miracles and teachings He says the disciples will be able to do even after He leaves, providing them courage and strength in the face of His impending departure. And we discussed the role of the Holy Spirit helping to confirm for us that we have been saved. She said she only thought the Spirit came down like a dove at Jesus's baptism. And we discussed how there are two ways to view "good works" in relation to God: either 1) God is like a neighbor you see that you think you want to become friends with, so you do lots of good things for that neighbor in an attempt to get the neighbor to become your friend, or 2) God is like someone who is already your friend and you naturally do things to draw closer to Him and get to know Him better, because that's what we do with people we love. She said that her upbringing taught her the first way, but she's seeing more now that it's really the second. Receptive. Seems like fertile soil. So we keep tilling and watering...

The neighbor in back of us has such a beautiful garden. I hang-dry my laundry on the porch and have always loved looking into his bloom-filled back yard and small orchard. Last fall we finally met him and briefly spoke, but with the beautiful change of the weather we've both been outside more often. And we've

been speaking more often - me from the balcony, him in his garden. I finally asked him if we could make a visit with him one day, which he very enthusiastically encouraged us to do! He's now become a friend, and our children love going to his house, playing with the dogs, and running around barefoot in the grass. He's got a picture of Jesus on the cross hanging in his hallway, but he vehemently denies any real religion. Time will tell what kind of soil his heart is. In the meantime, we're enjoying the neighborly friendliness, the shared bounty, the conversations, the meals together.

We are just seed scatterers over here - through all the ups and downs of seasons of hope and renewal, often followed by seasons of trial and destruction. But thankfully, God has not asked us to be in charge of the harvest. We are scatterers, tillers, waterers. Bringing the bread of life, the living water, and the easy yoke to people who are hungry and thirsty and tired. And we pray for the harvest. Will you, please, continue to pray for this, too?





Prayer Requests

- Catalina recently led women's Bible studies in the books of Jude, 2John, and 3John. (I guess we're deciding to read the Bible backwards! haha!) While the group breaks over the summer, she will be meeting with another lady to study 1John, which we'll study in the Fall, so that the Romanian lady can lead the study herself. Please pray for her as she leads different studies.
- Derek made his guitar worship debut on June 11. He'll continue working into the worship rotation here and there as he learns new songs. Please pray about this. Derek playing is really not the answer we're wanting; we've been praying for a worship leader for years. But, as always, Derek is willing to learn and step into any service where God gives opportunity, if it is His will.
- Also, Derek is continuing his seminary degree, and while our pastor is Stateside, Derek will preach several times at our Romanian church and twice at the Ukrainian church to help fill in. He recently preached at the Hungarian church's Wednesday night service. This is definitely new ground for Derek! And while he's happy to serve however needed, it is a continual reminder to pray for more Romanian leadership and a Romanian pastor.
- Now that both Elin and Atticus are strong readers, they have begun weekly Romanian lessons with our old language tutor. Plus they've chosen to go to a month-long day camp at a Christian school just down the road from our house in July, and they'll go to the week-long Kids Camp in August. So that's nearly five weeks of language immersion for them. Please pray for their language to

improve in these weeks. Plus, Derek will be taking a language course in July, as well. Pray for him, too!

- We've run the numbers and will need to raise about \$2,500 of new monthly partners and \$40,000 in one-time donations when we return to the States in October. Please join us in prayer for this need.





In May we got to visit the Hungarian church, and Derek preached at their Wednesday night service while their pastor translated. They are truly the epitome of hospitality and invited our whole family over early to share a meal with them and walk around their town and go to the park. And of course they showed us their chickens and duck!



Catalina's parents - our Lolly and Pop - visited at the end of April! We even took a few days to finally tour a bit of Bucharest with them, and Lolly read aloud a

book with the older kids while here. It was a joyous visit, and we can't wait to see them again in October!





With all these days of beautiful weather, we've had a lot more outdoor church events. Recently we had a big group hike with members from both the Romanian and Ukrainian churches (top). We've had an after-church picnic (bottom left) and even spent many homeschool mornings on a picnic blanket in our courtyard or at the park (bottom right).



After a multi-year hiatus, Kids Frisbee has been reinstated, and our kids are so pumped! Derek is one of the coaches. Baby M still comes and visits sometimes and we get to babysit when her mom is at work sometimes. The kids always

love just enveloping her into the family whenever she's here! And we've had the rare treat of going to the movie theaters with the kids to see The Little Mermaid. Derek and I are able to go to the movies because they're in English with Romanian subtitles. But almost all children's movies are always dubbed in Romanian. But this one was in English, so we took the whole family!



Catalina recently went to a Women's Conference in May with some other ladies from our church. It was a wonderful time together, full of encouraging lectures and conversations. The speaker was actually German, and a Romanian translated it. It was an immersive weekend of the Romanian language, and such a cool reminder of God's work in hearts all over the world in all different tongues and nations. Thank you for your partnership for the Kingdom work God has given us here in this Romanian context. We appreciate each and every one of you and desire to steward your resources and sacrifices wisely for the sake of Christ's Kingdom.





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