

Now that the Fourth of July is over, we're deep into hot summer. We all have pictures burned into our memory, and one that sticks with me is driving through the country during the hot days of summer. My memory still clearly sees a farmer cultivating his corn field. Small tractor, Allis Chalmers, not the big monsters of today. Umbrella shielding the farmer from the sun, no air-conditioned cab. Slow, tedious work, not contracted spraying like today.

Our faith in Jesus needs constant cultivation. I think of some seeds in Jesus' parable. "Others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" (Mark 4:18-19). They heard God's Word but, this makes the difference, they didn't monitor their emotions. We all have "the cares of the world," we all are tempted by "the deceitfulness of riches," and we all desire "other things." How can you and I resist the temptation to be "normal" so that the Word produces God's good crop through us? Submitting our every feeling, idea, and plan to the will of God, we "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Mission Central helps us cultivate saving faith. Keeping up with the latest on the web site, pondering your Official Adoption Agreement, including the Prayer Calendar in your devotions, hearing from missionaries in the harvest fields, and visiting in person to see the mission artifacts in the barn and the new creation theater... These activities first keep us personally focused on the precious seed of the Gospel of Christ in our own lives. They remind us that we are indeed "not normal," "peculiar" people. The Word of God is woven through every activity of Mission Central. "'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:24-25).

"But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold" (Mark 4:20). That's the second benefit of your participation in Mission Central. Through you the Spirit increases the numbers of people who know Jesus. "Do Thou in grace the harvest raise, and Thou alone shalt have the praise!" (Lutheran Service Book, 921:1).