**Hillside UMC Sermon Prep Sheet**

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**Date: Sunday, April 12, 2015**

**Sermon Title: All I Need to Know About God I Learned from Gardening**

**Scripture: Matthew 13:1-9 *(New International Version)***

**13**That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. **2**Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. **3**Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4**As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5**Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6**But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7**Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. **8**Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. **9**Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

**Call to Worship: (8:30 only) – Based on Matthew 13:1-9**

L: The Lord is the sower of the seeds of love and redemption.
**P: But we have not always been ready to receive these seeds.**L: Today we hear again the scriptures that remind us of the awesome generosity of God.
**P: Help us be good soil, O God, prepared to receive your love and to grow in that love.**L: Amen.
**P: AMEN.**

**Basic Theme: *The Easter season is a time of momentum and excitement as we celebrate our resurrected Lord and Savior; however, it is easy to quickly return to our mundane lives once the Easter lilies are out of sight. Don't lose the spiritual fervor that often accompanies Easter Sunday. Continue to cultivate your faith and support others in their growth as well.***

**Sermon Snapshot (Key Points): In the first of Jesus' parables, he encourages listeners to consider the state of their own hearts. Are they open to and accepting of God's word and the sacrifices that come with following Jesus? Or are their hearts hard, their faith lacking deep roots or choked out by worldly concerns? The word of God is available to all who hear, but only those whose hearts are prepared to hear it and follow Him will enjoy fruitful spiritual lives.**

**So What? What is the condition of your heart? How are you cultivating your life for an authentic relationship with God? As a church body, how do we cultivate and support a healthy environment for new believers and those whose faith is waivering? Our spiritual growth is never complete; there is always more work to be done in the garden of our hearts.**