

Sexagesima – Vicar Anderson sermon
St. Luke 8:4-15 “Your Salvation Comes Through the Word.”
February 11/12, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Prayer: Almighty God, merciful Father, we give You most hearty thanks for Your divine Word, which You are pleased to sow as a heavenly seed among us and we humbly ask You that by Your Word and Spirit You would make our hearts a good ground, guard us against the dangers arising from cares and riches and the pleasures of this life, and keep our faith from being uprooted by the blasts of affliction, that in an honest and good heart we may bring forth abundant fruit; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (The Lutheran Liturgy, companion altar book for The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 81)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the 8th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who sows the Seed of the Word of God for all to hear, sowing forgiveness and grace in you, dear fellow redeemed:

Living in Iowa, there is one part of the scenery that I have gotten used too. The land is flat, and since it is flat, there will be corn. Miles and miles of corn. Jesus' parable is very straight forward and knowing these congregations, you should hear Christ speaking directly to you. This message is very fitting. You know what it takes to get that corn to grow. The field has to be tilled. The rocks have to be picked out of the field and thrown to the side. The field has to be treated so that the weeds don't attack and kill the baby corn stalk. Lastly, you pray to God for rain and look expectantly for it to grow. Jesus has designed this parable for you. Now as you are the sowers of your fields, in our text we see Jesus, the sower of the Word. Jesus warns us how the Word is under threat. He teaches that this is not just a parable of categories and where you fit in. Jesus is teaching us the truth that we can't grow His Word on our own. We have to rely on him.

Jesus uses imagery that easily sticks in our minds. The parallels are very easy to spot. Pesky birds fly down and eat the seeds on the road. The Devil is a hunting lion stalking his prey and ready to strike. He is constantly working to make those who hear the Word reject it. The seed is eaten with almost no chance for it to ever come back. The seed can be planted multiple times and a person can reject it every time. Where the field's edge sits, the rocks are thrown. The Word is believed and quickly forgotten. Many people love how the Word can be refreshing and comforting. But when the troubles and absolute hard times put us on our knees, those refreshing words can be tossed aside because what can they do to help me now?

Where weed killer isn't used, the thorns grow. When God's Word isn't active, then faith is choked out. Jesus shows the crowd how easily the pleasures and riches of world can be those temptations that make faith wither. They saw the life He was living, yet they looked at all of their possessions and they did not want to give them up. The good fruit that comes from the Word is twisted into fruit selfishly used for oneself.

Did you hear yourself in any of those categories? A misconception of this text is to think that this text only applies to the world and not to those who believe. Most of the time if not all of the time we will consider ourselves in that field, holding onto the Word and yielding a hundredfold. A key verse to think about is when Jesus called out, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* How often do we let the Word of God go in one ear and out the other ear? We hear; honor your parents, honor authority, don't covet, don't look at someone with lust, whoever hates his brother is a murderer. When we sin, we are rejecting God's Word and Satan lies in wait.

Jesus tells his disciples that, *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'* Jesus has given us the understanding of this parable. But like the unbelievers, who can harden their hearts again and again, we also can harden our hearts. We cave to the pressures of the world and fail to live our Christian lives. We sin often which puts us under intense scrutiny. The more that we behave like the unbelievers do, the more we let God's Word drift away.

When we are not listening to God's Word, our faith will not grow. And if we set aside the Word long enough, our faith will die out. God says to rely on him, yet the pleasure of this life, the pleasures of our sins make us feel so good. It might not even be the pleasures of life either. We might ignore the comfort that Word brings in the hardest times in our lives. The budget might be tight, we begin to worry that God is not providing for us. Just because we have ears, doesn't mean that we actually hear and learn. As we get caught up in our sins and problems, Jesus' parable does point to a solution. The question to be answered is, why is Jesus so concerned that we listen to what He says? Why should we listen?

The reason that Jesus is so concerned about us listening to Him is because He is the one who is sowing the seed. *"God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4). The truth is taught to us in the Word of God. The Word of God is a Means of Grace. It brings forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. The Word shows us that Christ is the one who saves us. It teaches how He died on the cross, taking away our sins, and rising from the dead. Why should we listen? This is how Christ comes to us. He comes to us directly in His Word. He doesn't hide himself. This is where we find understanding. It's not in what the world has to offer. We find it in the Word.

With your ears you hear that the Word of God is powerful and effective because it is how Jesus comes to you. Your sins are many and there are many times that you have failed to listen to God's Word. You can't grow the seed, but when you acknowledge that you have sinned against God, it is Jesus' Words that you hear when the pastor says to you "I forgive you all your sins." That word of absolution works powerfully within you. Jesus sows His forgiveness and grace in you. He takes and not only plants the seed, He waters it and He makes it grow. The Word brings you assurance. Your sins are not attached to you.

As you grow in the Word, it provides you with strength and comfort when the temptations come and the thorns grow. This is how you know that you are in the good soil. Jesus says, "*as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.*" Jesus planted His Word in you and made your heart into good soil.

Holding fast to the Word of God, the honest and good heart is revealed. It is nurtured by Christ. We know that by nature our hearts are sinful. The heart is against God all the time and knows can't rely on itself. But Christ comes to our hearts through the Word and dwells in us. With growing and patience in God's Word, Jesus produces fruit in us, fruit that is shared with those around us.

Jesus teaches with this parable that the Word is not going out only to believers. After hearing God's Word, and hearing how plainly the truth is taught, some people will still reject it. This is a sad truth and an all too familiar one. But knowing that the truth is rejected does not stop us from sharing it. We want people to hear how their salvation has been won. The Gospel has the power to change hearts. The Law reveals that we are fallen people. We needed to be redeemed. The Gospel proclaims the truth, that we are saved by faith alone. The Word brings us comfort and joy as we continue to grow in it.

As the Word works, we see how powerful it is. The Word is powerful through the working of the Holy Spirit. This is what we confess in the third article of the Apostle's Creed. We can't increase our faith on our own. It is the Holy Spirit who calls us by the Gospel. He opens our ears so that we hear the saving message. He is the reason we keep our faith. Not only does He keep us in the true faith through the preaching of the Word but He keeps the whole Christian Church on earth with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. The Word is working throughout our entire life.

The spring and fall are the two seasons that are looked on with great anticipation. It is the time for seeds to be planted and for them to rise up for harvest. Thankfully the Word of God does not work in seasons. The Word continues to work when we are in it, exploring, and hearing all that God has done for us. As we learn and hear His Word, Jesus comes to us. The world wants a personal Christ. He doesn't get more personal than in His Word. We hear the comfort that He brings us which helps us through our trials and temptations. The Word of God tells us what Christ has done. The Word keeps us strong in our faith. The Word grows our fruit, fruit that is meant for the world. A testimony of Christ's constant love to the world that comes from hearing the Word of the Gospel. "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*" Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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