

Sexagesima
St. Luke 8:4-15
February 19th, 2017
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Spoke by A Parable

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last Sunday I mentioned that the three Sundays in Pre-Lent each carry a specific theme: invitation, instruction and enlightenment. Last Sunday we were invited by our Lord to labor in the vineyard of the Church. Next Sunday our sin-blind eyes will be opened to see and believe on our Lord + Jesus Christ. Today, we receive the instruction of the Word of God from the Word Himself—our dear Lord + Jesus.

We are instructed by our Lord with a parable. Our Lord spoke in parables so that the mysteries of the faith might hold more weight. Think about it, when things are confusing or unclear—when they are a mystery to our ears—we spend more time contemplating them. Whereas, things that are easy and simple to understand we do not spend much time thinking about. We really do not need to because we understand them. But, when things pose a problem to our minds, we spend more time considering it. And, this is why our Lord speaks in parables, so that we might give them more thought. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” In other words, those who desire to hear, will lend their ears to listening and understanding what is being spoken. Today, we lend our ears to hear the Word of God in a parable spoken by our Lord + Jesus Christ.

This is one of the few parables that our Lord explains for us. He gives us a road map to understand those parables which He does not explain. The parable is a simple one: The seed—the Word of God—is cast out by the Sower—the Lord + Jesus—into four types of soil. The first soil is the wayside; the second is rocky; the third is filled with thorns; and the fourth is good soil. We will examine each of these soils in turn.

Our Lord says of the soil by the wayside that “it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.” In His explanation, the Lord tells us that the people that this type of soil represents are the ones from whom the devil steals the Word of God. These are the ones who never actually receive the Word of God. It is not planted at all. The devil steals it away before it can ever do anything. This soil is the where the Word of God falls most. For, this world is filled unbelievers and those who have no use for the Word of God. The Gospel is preached and they have no use for it, nor do they care to hear it. This is the work of the devil. He not only seeks to destroy our faith, but he works tirelessly to make sure that those who are outside of the Church, never hear to believe the Word of God.

In the short time that I have been here you have probably heard me mention the unholy trinity: the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. You will notice that the first soil—the wayside—does not allow the Word of God to take root because of the devil. The next two soils employ both our sinful flesh and the world to attack the Word of God. So then, we have a parable which address how our enemies—the devil, our sinful flesh and the world—attack our faith and the Church.

Next, the seed—the Word of God—is cast upon the rock. The rocky soil is where the seed is able to take root, but as our Lord + Jesus says, “the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.” This soil represents the seed being attacked by our own sinful flesh. For, it is temptation which drives our soul away from the Word of God. These are the Christians that cannot endure hardship, persecution and the like. In short, they cannot endure the Law and will of God. Their flesh chases after their own desires and will. The demands of remaining faithful to the Word of God dries up the root of the Word of God that has been planted. It is easier for them to cave into their fleshly desires, than to endure sufferings and persecution, like St. Paul mentions in the Epistle.

The third soil is that which is covered by thorns. The Word of God grows, but it ends up being choked out by the thorns, which our Lord tells us are the “cares, riches and pleasures of life.” This is the attack upon the Word of God done by the world. For, the world holds out its “cares, riches and pleasures” to attack our faith, and drive out that which has been planted. And you will notice at this point that the soils are progressing in how deep the seed gets planted. The first was not planted at all. The second was only planted enough to sprout, but had nothing in which to take root. This third soil the seed is allowed to be planted and grow, but ends up being choked out by this world.

Notice also, that our Lord contrasts thorns with pleasures of this life. Pleasures are supposed to be enjoyable things; being poked with sharp things is not. The pleasures of life are thorns for that very reason they take our eyes of faith off of the Word of God, and place it on earthly cares. Therefore, it chokes out our faith; it pokes at our soul so that our faith is eventually driven out. However, our Lord is not simply talking about all the stuff we have; all our earthly possessions. Certainly having nice things gives us pleasure, but our Lord inserts the little word: “cares.” This word implies the opposite of having things. For, when we have an abundance we do not have a care about how we are going to supply our needs. No, when we have an abundance we have the problem of replacing our trust in our Lord with our trust in keeping our abundance. But, we do not have an abundance, and when we in fact struggle to make ends meet, this is also a danger to our faith, for we are tempted to not look to and trust in our Lord Who promises to provide all that we need to support this body and life, but we only look at our poor situation, and lose hope, and eventually our faith when no help is evident in coming.

This is how the world works to destroy our faith. It either takes away our possessions, so that we despair, or it gives us all we want so that we have no need of God, or a Savior, or the Church. In the end, the world wins when it gets us to take our eyes off of our greatest need—forgiveness of our sins—and places them on the things of this life. And this leads us to the fourth soil.

The fourth soil is good ground that produces an hundred, sixty and thirty-fold of what was planted. Well, what makes good soil? As a farmer I have some experience in this. To make good soil certain things must be done to the ground before you can plant. First, one must remove all the obstacles that make it good ground. In other words, you do not plant on a road but soil that has good potential, then you must remove the thorns and the rocks.

What this means in a spiritual sense is we must not allow the devil, our sinful flesh and the world to have the reign over our reception of the Word of God. We must cling to our Lord, for in Him is salvation. He is the only One Who lived a perfect obedience to the Law and will of God. He is the One Whose sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross made atonement for our sins. He is the One Who instructs

us with His Word so that by His Holy Ghost, we might receive faith and life. Therefore, do not give place to the devil, the world and your sinful flesh, but remain ever diligent in your study of God's Word and in prayer and conversation with God, for He will rescue from your enemies, and set you firmly in the good soil of His Church where your faith will be nurtured.

However, there is more to finding good soil, than picking a good spot, and removing the rocks and thorns and weeds. For, that soil must be plowed; turned over. It must have fertilizer placed upon it. And the most natural fertilizer is manure and compost, which is all of your kitchen scraps and lawn and tree trimmings mixed in with sawdust and ashes, and in short all of your garbage mixed up so that the bugs and worms make it into new dirt full of nutrients good for the soil. All of that plowing and fertilizing produces good soil. So, what does that mean from a spiritual sense? I believe the Apostle St. Paul gives us an example of what plowing and fertilizing good soil means for the Christian: it means persecutions, hardships and sufferings. That is what makes good soil. That is what strengthens our faith, and makes us cling to our Lord: enduring the flinging of manure and garbage that the world throws at us.

The people who have no use for the Word of God feel no attack from the devil. The people that hear the Word of God, but cannot endure temptation, only endure the attack by their sinful flesh briefly. The people who lose their faith because of the "cares, riches and pleasures of this life" cannot endure the attacks of the world, for their possessions (or lack there of) are more important than the Word of God. But, those of us who endure hardship, persecution and strife from the devil, the world and our flesh, will receive a crown—the crown of life. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life, our Lord promised us.

We endure by faithfully remaining in God's Word, daily being instructed in His promises. He is faithful, and He will bring us through this vale of tears to His eternal home. He came down from His throne in Heaven to dwell with us, so that He might do the work we are unable to do, and to suffer the punishment we were unable to endure. All this out of His great love for us. And, not only does He do this for us, but He gives us His Word to be instructed in daily, so that we might ever cling to Him and His promises, so that we might live with Him for all eternity. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.