

Sermon for Sexagesima Sunday - Luke 8:4-15

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Perhaps one of the most beloved parables of our Lord is the parable of the sower and the seed. This story of the sower and his seed is of such great importance that we hear it every year in our assigned readings. As in all parables, Christ is speaking forth the truth God's Kingdom, how God forgives us sinners, using a common everyday example from the world. But what is unique to the parable of the sower and the seed is that our Lord tells us exactly what and who is symbolized in the story. We don't have to guess about the details of the story because the Lord lists them plainly. "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God."

The first hymn we sang this morning is a poem that gives even a clearer picture into the parable of the sower and His seed. Take a look again in your bulletin insert at this poem. Let's read the first stanza of "The Sower" all together:

"The ground could not be rockier
but he is undeterred:
The sower sows his wholesome seed
as Christ proclaims His word."

What we see first and foremost about this story is that this is no ordinary sower and he carries with him extraordinary seed. The seed is wholesome; so much so that it even causes life to exist where no life did before. It's just as the word of God: speaking forth life out of nothing; speaking forth us dead sinners to be living saints. And as for the sower, well, He's the best part: undeterred, persistent, He cannot be held back. He sows his seed in even the rockiest ground, and if you've ever had to dig out rocks of a farm field, that's no light task. So it is that Christ proclaims His word. To our hearts clinging to the cares of health, wealth, and happiness as to idols made of rock, so too our Lord roots out our hardened hearts and gives us hearts of flesh. He plants His word that it may grow up and yield fruit.

What else becomes of this seed, this Word, and of the sower Christ? Let's read again together stanza 2:

"Some seed among the thorns will choke,
some seed the birds will snatch,
Some seed the blazing sun will scorch,
but in a fertile patch."

Sometimes this part of the parable is explained in such a way as that completely different people have various encounters with the word of God, as in, "This person is clearly someone from whom Satan has snatched away the word, not allowing it to settle into their heart." Or "That person fell into hard times and now has rejected the faith." Or "That other person has been choked by the cares and riches and pleasure of this world." "But me? Well obviously, I'm the good soil, after all, just look at me!"

The problem with this interpretation is that we must remember the audience whom our Lord is addressing: only His disciples, both then and now. "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God." As such, the Lord warns us: The devil is still on the prowl, seeking opportunities to take away the word from our hearts. Times of testing to be faithful to God's word are regularly put

before us. And if we think for a moment that we're immune to the cares and riches and pleasures of this life because we're baptized, we're delusional. We have and we do cling to the things this world. They are working overtime to choke our faith in Christ.

And yet, the sower is persistent, remember? He continues to cast His word into our ears ... into our hearts. Let's read together now stanzas 3 & 4:

"Some seed will sprout and grow and yield
good fruit a hundredfold,
As fruit is borne in honest hearts
when God's good word takes hold.
May words of truth and deeds of love
from patient hearts abound
That through their witness faith crops up
in other fertile ground."

Seeds that land in good soil will in time sprout, grow, and yield. Just one seed can produce much fruit and with it, even more seed. So it is also the word of God that takes residence in honest hearts. What makes hearts honest? Only the word which God plants, no merit or worthiness of our own. It's God's good word that takes hold of our hearts to make them honest, virtuous, good, and patient.

What then do honest and patient hearts do? Speak words of truth and carry out deeds of love. Words of truth, those from God's word, are not always easy to hear, nor are they easy to speak. To tell someone the truth of God's word who is in danger because of their sin is a frightful thing! So too it is difficult to hear those words and repent. Coupled with words of truth are deeds of love. Living out our vocations to neighbors, even and especially those neighbors who are of the same residence is an endless and often thankless job. Yet Words of truth and deeds of love cause faith to crop up in other fertile ground. By the word, we even bear this fruit. Nothing good comes without perseverance and setbacks—both in the crop field and in the Christian life.

Still we have a sower who knows our every struggle and then some. Christ continues to sow His seed in our lives. Let's say together the final stanza of our hymn:

"Where rocks and thorns and birds are rife
the faithful sower sows
The word of Christ, the thorn-crowned King,
rejoicing in what grows."

Rocks, thorns, birds, addictions, selfishness, cruelty, grudges, and hatred are still rife in our lives. Like the sower who gives unceasing attention to the troubles that assail his crop, so our Lord has just the balm for our every sin. "You are forgiven!" He says. He knows the way of sorrows, the devil's temptations, the thorns, but also the nails, the spear, and the cross. He bore them for you. What's more, He rejoices in you and the good works you do. He's glad to see good fruit born in your life.

The holy Word, the Seed of God, the Christ born of Mary, crucified and risen from the dead, is here for us in bread and wine, this day calling us once again. Come and receive Him. "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God." Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠