

# Sexagesima + Second Sunday Before Lent

February 7, 2021

Luke 8:4-15

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The topic recently came up at our family's supper table about planting tomato seeds so we can have a bountiful harvest this summer. The snow and cold made us question if it's too soon, yet sowing seeds must begin early and in a controlled environment. The plant must take in the good nutrients only good soil may provide, the seed must sprout forth into a strong and fortified plant that will be able to sustain life outside the controlled climate of the home. Once outside, the plant will often appear helpless against the birds of the air or the squirrels that constantly patrol the parameter. It will be a battle for life and death.

The Gospel we heard today is another parable meant to reveal the deep truths of the faith by using analogies that should be familiar to the lives of the disciples. Yet, even they still said to Jesus, *"What does this parable mean?"* Many today probably join the disciples in asking, *"What does Jesus mean?"* Why? Because we no longer sow seeds or farm as the generations of our families before us did. These once necessary and difficult tasks for survival are simply lost on many of us.

Now, just as the Landowner last week was God, the Sower is Christ Himself and the seed is the Word in which He preaches. The parable provides an image of the Church and how the preached Gospel is received in various ways and yet brings forth the fruit of faith in very few hearts.

Thus, the parable Jesus presents is put forth with four types of soil and four types of reception of the seed, which as mentioned just previously is the Word of God.

The first type of soil is the bare road, seeds sowed or tossed freely upon this road fall and yield no reward. In fact, they do not even have the opportunity to implant themselves. Rather the birds of the air, come down as seagulls looking to feast upon breadcrumbs scattered along a body of water. They are little devils who swoop down in order to snatch the Word of God that has entered your ears before it will ever even reach your heart.

How so, the Christian asks? Well, what is the first thing you do when you depart the Divine Service (or turn off the live stream if you are at home)? What happens when you

reach your vehicle and prepare to drive down Russell Road? Do you promptly turn on the radio, catch a sports score, rejoin the podcast you began on the way to Church this morning? Or, do you discuss the readings, the Gospel, and the sermon with your family (children) or among friends? Do you take time to meditate upon the Good News the Sower just sowed into your ears? Or do you permit the little devils of the world opportunity to snatch it away?

Well, at least with the rocks the seed has a chance, right? Here are those individuals who hear the Word of God and receive it with great eagerness and joy. But, with just the right balance of carelessness and temptation, the roots of the seed never take - the rocky soil leads to a quick death.

This is a scary situation; how many congregations have young people that are brought up in the Church and no longer possess faith? The children were brought up in the church, the seed was planted in a safe environment, but when the times of temptation approached outside the home, they fell away.

The thing about life is not a question of "if" temptation comes, but when temptation comes. Jesus will say to His disciples before His arrest on the Mount of Olives, "***Pray not to come into temptation.***" (Lk. 22:46) Yet, we all succumb to temptation, just as the disciples all fell asleep while the Lord prayed.

For some, the temptations of life lie in the people they associate with, their friends and co-workers or the doctrines of false churches that allure them. What lacks for seed sowed upon the rocks is proper and sustaining nutrients for the life of man - what is required and needed is the water of life found in the daily drowning and rising of Holy Baptism.

But the person who has entered temptation has turned away from this life-giving water, they are as Judas who believed for a little while, but fell away and succumbed to the temptations of the world.

Judas is a good segue to the third type of soil, the soil of thorns. Judas believed for a little while before turning to the desires of his heart, one of the causes of his fall and death was the desire of reaches and pleasure.

You see, the soil of rock is of no benefit as is the soil of thorns. We learn in verse twelve of our Gospel that seeds sown in either of these settings will survive "***for a time,***" but death is certain apart from good soil.

Over time, the thorns will literally suffocate and impede any growth of the plant you wish to grow.

Here is an image of competing world-views. The child is prepared throughout their youth, but as they depart the home and enter the uncontrolled environment of the world or a college campus, the cares and pleasures of this world, the desire for riches lead them astray and choke the very life of God from their veins.

Saint John wrote in his first epistle, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* (1 John 2:15)

This is not easy though, is it? We come to church but once a week and then depart into the world and you are expected not to be conformed by your surroundings.

Well, for this, I believe it is important to go back to the conclusion of the first section of the Gospel when Jesus says, *“But other [seed] fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.’ When He had said these things He cried, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”*

*“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

To be one who *“hears”* is to be a catechumen - the word catechumen derives from the Greek as *“one under instruction”* and often refers to a young person or adult participating in the ongoing instruction of the Christian faith. Paul writes in Romans, *“faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”* (Romans 10:17)

Therefore, the process of tending to the soil of one’s heart, to be conformed in the Christian faith, and be brought into eternal life begins and ends with the continual hearing of God’s Word, the seed of the Sower.

And yet, as we learn from the Gospel, not everyone who receives the seed will remain in the Sower. This is often a mystery to us, but also reveals why the Sower sows indiscriminately, He casts His net wide. His aim is for His seed to reach every highway, every crevice, every thorn infested portion of the earth, and every tilled acre of soil prepared for the spring season of planting - His aim is for His seed to take root and to grow, sometimes in the most mysterious of ways.

If you remember when Jesus called His first disciple, He does not tell them to lower their nets into the best-known fishing holes, but says go to the deep waters, the most unlikely of places and that is where you will catch men and you will catch them alive -

dear brothers and sisters, that is what this Word does - it rescues, it nourishes, it conforms you, it forgives, it provides the nutrients for life.

Throughout the sermon today, I've referenced children often and for good reason...

My daughter Lydia recently approached me and said, *"Daddy, you are a child!"* At first, I wasn't too keen on her making this declaration, but she quickly followed it up with, *"You are a child of God, aren't you?"* Yes, I am and that is the correct manner of viewing our relationship to God. As His children, we are hearers of His Word, we are catechumens and our time of learning and hearing the Word stretches beyond the age of adolescents.

The season of Lent is upon us and with it will come the rigors of the penitential season. Much like life, the season will expose you to the elements of the world, you will be faced with the aspects of life that assault your faith, that lead you into temptation, tribulation, and despair, but ultimately, you are invited back into the house of God where the Sower awaits with His seed - tilling the soil of your hearts and preparing you for the harvest to come in the resurrection of life everlasting. +INJ+

*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.*

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