

SEXAGESIMA

February 4 2018

Old Test: Is. 59:10-13

Epistle: 2 Cor. 11:19-12:9

Gospel: Luke 8:4-15

Standing...

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

At the end of our Gospel lesson Jesus speaks of having "ears to hear."
These aren't ears made of cartilage and skin.

These are ears that only hear when our mouths are made mute,
and our excuses have all run dry.

Might we all have ears like this, this morning...

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Sitting...

Two of my top things to convince people of in the course of my life is,
Slower traffic keep right. (SMH)

The second is, parables are not meant to make things clearer.

Parables are riddles.

Psalm 78 calls them dark sayings.

Used to obscure the message—

making the truth more difficult to grasp.

So, Pastor, are you saying, when I'm on a highway and I'm going slower than everybody else, I'm supposed to get over in the right-hand lane and let them pass? Yes.

And you're saying as well that Jesus didn't always preach in parables?

That is precisely what I'm saying.

When Jesus started His ministry, His teachings were very, very clear.

Everything was straightforward.

Yet, He began teaching in parables, hiding behind them as it were,
when people rejected Him.

When they wouldn't take Him as the Messiah—and
 when they looked to Him for entertainment purposes or to provide a free meal—
 This all came to a head,
 when the religious leaders said He was in league with the Devil.

That is when the truth, once very clear and straightforward was—on purpose—
 made confusing and difficult to grasp.

The disciples ask, "Jesus, why are you teaching in parables?"

"Why the riddles all the sudden?"

 Jesus explains that He does this so that seeing the masses would not see
 and hearing they would not hear, nor comprehend.

Now this isn't to say parables aren't instructive. They are.

 With the interpretation, parables offer a different perspective, a new worldview.

 Helping us to understand what God and His Kingdom are like—
 and us as well.

Because the disciples ask,

 we have been given the interpretation of this parable

 with Jesus saying that understanding this one,

 helps us understand the others He told (Mark 4:13).

So, here's what we know...

 The seed is God's Word—which is like no other seed.

 It is the message from God that all are sinners—you,

 but that God loved the sinful world so much that He sent His Son to save
 our fallen race; His Son who died and rose and made reconciliation
 between us and God, so that all who believe in Him are justified and saved
 from sin, death, and damnation.

That's the seed, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

 But not everyone believes, do they?

 Some folks have hearts and minds that are simply not interested.

 They don't believe Jesus.

 They chose instead to make up their own doctrine,
 their own versions of Jesus. They have a better way.

 And the seed—it never penetrates.

 It bounces off of their hearts like a ping-pong ball on the
 sidewalk. Becoming nothing more than lunch for the birds,
 which is the Devil and his demonic means and ways.

You know, no sane Sower would ever throw His precious seed
in the direction of the hardened path, but this One does.

It's because He's reckless. He leaves no soil unsown.

He sows His seed in foolish, weak, and impossible places,
with no thought of the gain or loss,
only conscious that the seed is good
and men are in need.

When the Sower takes a handful and throws His seed upon the rocky soil it's received
with joy at first,

but as soon as trial comes along—and trial always comes.

As soon as tribulation enters the picture...

the plant of faith just beginning to show signs of life,
witheres and blows right over.

Satisfied with the little bit they've heard, their faith was superficial.

And beloved, a superficial faith simply won't survive long in the heat of the day.

It takes a regular supply of God's Word to water it
and a regular eating of His Supper to keep it nourished.

But that's not what the rocky soil people do...

They give in to the worries of this life.

Again, no sane Sower would ever throw His precious seed
in the direction of the rocky soil, but this One does.

Because He's reckless, and He leaves no soil unsown.

He sows in ways that others think are foolish—wasteful.

The next type of soil is different. There's plenty of room for faith to grow here!
Plenty of room.

But instead of falling away when things go South, when things get difficult,
these fall away when things are going good.

I mean, aren't you aware of how many earthly concerns need to be tended to?

There are pleasures to be had, money to be earned.

Places to go—people to see!

These folks do whatever they want...

with the priority of Christ and His kingdom placed
further and further down the list.

The things now at the top of the list
choke out the little sprout of faith.

Eventually, the flesh is indulged
and the forgiveness of sins is ignored.

Our Lord has just described your kids,
your grandkids,
your neighbors,
your co-workers,
your friends, and
every single one of your acquaintances,
including most of you.

Which leads me to conclude again—
No sane Sower would ever throw His precious seed in the direction of the thorny soil,
but this One does, because He's reckless, and He leaves no soil unsown.
He sows where faith seemingly does not,
will not,
should not and
cannot grow.

If this Sower was like you, or me—
we would have given up on us a long time ago.
Why throw the seed in his direction, are you kidding?
Throw seed in her direction? Really?
Neither of them are going to believe.
No fruit will come from them...

But this Sower is not like us. He sows and He sows and He sows knowing full well that
some of it will be snatched away by Satan or scorched out by the world, or choked out
of you by sinful desires.

He scatters His Word of forgiveness everywhere.
In back alleys, brothels, corporate offices, even in the halls of government.
He casts it into crack houses and prisons,
front-line trenches and fraternity houses.
He sows not for profit,
or fame,
or honor,
or prestige.

He sows His seed over the spans of the millennia,

over the course of the century,
 and the decade,
 over the week and yes,
 even over this very day—
 right now.

What soil will the Gospel seed fall upon this morning,
 as it is cast out in this place?
 He who has ears to hear let him hear...

Your very nature is corrupted and diseased with sin—it's killing you.

Like Pr. Bruss said 2 weeks ago from this same pulpit, the sins you come in here with today are the same ones you came in here with the week prior. The same sins of lust, anger, worry, jealousy, envy and pride. The same sins of laziness, gossip and hate.

Yet, in Jesus there is forgiveness, there is life, and there is salvation. For He is true God and true Man.

His deeds—not yours,
 His Words—not yours,
 His life, His death, His resurrection, His sending of the Holy Spirit,
 His working in and through the ministry of the Word, His call to repentance and His promise of the forgiveness of sins to all who believe and are baptized are precisely what you need to be reconciled to God.

The Sower sows His precious Law/Gospel seed in your direction because
 He is good and gracious and merciful toward you.
 He wants you, no matter what you are or what you've been,
 to receive the word of forgiveness,
 to receive this precious seed.

To have faith take root within you,
 so as to produce fruit,
 and have the life Christ means for you to have.

Though most is lost, some of the seed falls on good soil.

This soil is called good because the seed germinates there.

Roots are sent down, faith sprouts up and as it grows, it produces fruit.
 The fruit of: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness,
 gentleness and self-control.

The seed finds earth, and it brings forth life. Death and Resurrection.

Many things threaten the seed—which is why the Third Commandment calls us to Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.

What does this mean?

That we fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching or His Word,
(in other words, not give into the temptation to be like the first three soils)
But...gladly hear it and learn it
(which is the practice of the fourth soil).

And this is why we pray that the Lord would keep us steadfast in His Word,
bringing to naught all the plots of the devil to snatch the Lord's Word
away from us, causing our faith to wither and die.

In the holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sitting...