

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“As Jesus said these things, he called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’”

Last week you heard about salvation by God’s grace alone. Today the focus is on how he works through the Scriptures, his word, alone. All the laborers received the same wage last week because the focus was on the generous master of the vineyard. Today the focus is on the Sower who sows the seed and what this seed produces.

It’s easy to say God’s word does what God sends it to do and it’s another thing to believe it. A perfect example of this is seen today in the Gospel reading, the Parable of the Sower. In this parable, God teaches you about how God works, and you see yourselves in all these soils which God admonishes you of the danger as you live in the world and the devil, the world, and your fallen flesh seek to tear you away from God’s word from your lives in some way, shape, or form. He calls you to repent and to turn back to the Sower and his seed as you look toward that final day when you see the fruit which has been born in patience because of Christ.

Jesus said, “When a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to [Jesus], he said in a parable: ‘A Sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.’ As he said these things, he called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’”

When it comes to God’s word, you follow right along with Jesus in this reading and think to yourselves, “yes Lord, the word goes out and does its work. I heard that a few minutes ago in the Old Testament reading.” This is true it does. But the thing about your life is rather than letting that be the case and trusting solely and completely God’s word is sufficient the temptation is to lose sight of and neglect or especially in the church it’s easy to focus on the fruits as your way of seeing what works and what doesn’t, or at least fruits as people define them.

Listen again to the explanation Jesus gives about this parable. “And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, ‘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.’ 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.’”

The disciples had been given to know the secrets or perhaps a better translation can be the “mysteries” of the Kingdom of God. You have been given to know those same things. So, as you examine your life in accord with this parable and teaching of Jesus where does the fault lie in all of this? Does it ever, at any time, lie with the seed, God’s word? No, but where does the fault lie? In the soil and the dangers which exist in and around the soil. The temptation is to switch blame onto the word. But really, let’s be honest, this is doubting God’s word. This comes into play then when you want to try to reconcile or rationalize the soil and put the blame back onto the seed. You don’t want to face the fact that you are the problem and not God.

In the church, though, you know you must be careful how you talk because you know better, you’re good Lutherans. The word of God must fit into this equation somewhere, so this is where you try to subtly add things to God’s word that sound good but really are ways in your minds, you think you can shift the blame away to something or someone else.

Why is that? It's because this parable hits too close to home on many levels. It's a part of man's sinful nature to want to try and shift the blame off himself and onto God or someone else. You listen to what Jesus says this all means and it hits you, though, because it starts to describe the life of many loved ones, friends, and your own life maybe not this instant but at some point, in the past or a path you are heading on right now. Really Jesus describes all of you in this as you are all these soils. How can you see this and examine your life? Look around and look at yourself and ask questions in accord with what Jesus is teaching and revealing to you in this text.

Do you have cares in this life? Are the devil and his minions around trying to choke out your faith in Christ? Are you tempted to ignore God's word and get caught up in what's going on around you? Is this world defining how you live your life or is God's word the lamp that lightens the path on which you walk through this world? As one who is a regular hearer of the word are you tempted to grow complacent and apathetic and view your Christian faith in light of or defined by the fruits rather than the word such as the experience it creates in your life such as how it makes you feel or what you think it should make you feel rather than looking to God's word regardless of what you may think you get out of it or the response you may have at that momentary instant? Expand this out as well to beyond just yourself and to the church as a whole. Does the church measure its faithfulness according to its numbers, its preferences, and other factors or does it examine itself according to if God's word is being preached and taught faithfully? Starting to see the problem and where it lies?

The Epistle reading today gives an example of a congregation that was "duped" into thinking they needed something more than the word of God. So called "super apostles" came into their midst and boasted in their special gifts, their special skills, their next level of spirituality which could provide something new and uplifting that those "ordinary" Apostles like St. Paul couldn't give them. Paul had come among them desiring to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. He had rebuked them for wanting to all speak in tongues, he reprimanded them for have a worship service that was chaotic and irreverent, he called them to lived life that repented of sin and called them to love another. The Corinthians, though, thought they needed something more or so they thought. When someone new offering something new and exciting came along they had itching ears. And you know what? They took the bait. They started listening to the "super apostles" who weren't about all those boring things or too serious things which made them think and called them to a holy life like St. Paul preached.

What did St. Paul then say to them in the Epistle reading, "For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!" If you can't tell, this is ripe full of sarcasm here. The Holy Spirit knows how to be harsh because the peopled needed it. They needed to be brought back to see who the Sower is and what the seed is and does. We need it too when we lose sight of God's word because it takes our eyes off Christ and his work and puts the Christian faith in our lap and us in the driving seat. We want Sower to spice things up with seed rather than the seed being scattered.

Let's go back then to the Gospel and reading and what the Lord says. Jesus called out to the people, "he who has ears to hear let him ear." Perhaps a better translation of this can be "let him keep on hearing." Jesus calls you to hear his word, to listen to him. Don't fall into the dangers of the various soil in this parable and the things which took them away from the seed, away from the word. Likewise, and this is especially for the people in the church, don't forget how God operates; it's through his word.

Here's the thing, though, in all this. It's rather dull and weak how God works but what does God teach you? God's power is made perfect in weakness. It's so wonderfully simple like this and your faith is to desire to be in this word. Delight and rejoice in what the world calls foolishness because therein is where salvation is found. There's great fruit seen in the Gospel reading when Luke recorded for us, "And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant." Disciples are students who desire to learn. Their faith is a faith that seeks understanding and wants to be taught. If you aren't desiring to be hearing the word and to be taught, repent. God teaches you to be like the disciples who asked Jesus what this parable meant. Imitate them and their faith here in this reading. Look also at Paul who was given a thorn in

the flesh and prayed to God three times for it to be taken away, but God answered him with a “no.” God, in sense, told Paul, “You’re good. I am not going to take this thorn away, it’s good for you, it keeps you humble and teaches you to not trust those experiences and visions you were given as it shows that my grace is sufficient for you.”

All this today is about God’s word for you, and this is your life. The devil, the world, and your fallen flesh are all real threats, but Jesus has revealed to you the mysteries of the Kingdom of God and shows you all that you have in Christ. And when you are tempted to think you need something else or tempted to base your faith on things apart from God’s word trying to look up to God and find him in abstract things rather than clinging to his word in all its weakness God says, “nope, you have everything you need right here. Don’t get duped by those who will try get you live out your Christian life in ways which center on yourself and your response. Let he who has ears to hear keep on hearing.” When you are tempted to be apathetic and the humdrum of the daily life or sitting here on a Sunday morning God calls you to realize what’s happening as his word goes forth and accomplishes the purposes for which he sends it as he says in the Old Testament reading teaches you.

He calls you to come to this place to be taught and live your lives daily as disciples, students of the word. I remember hearing a couple of years ago a presentation where someone asked the question to the director of worship for our synod about worship. The woman asked, in a sense, “is the worship service to teach us or for us simply to participate in it?” The answer was yes as these two go hand in hand. You receive God’s gifts in the divine service, in this place. You don’t ascend to God rather everything here is about God coming to you in his word and sacraments. You don’t lift God’s name on high rather you call upon his name while he is near in these means of grace. Your Lord is here, and his seed is being scattered. In all of this too you learn. You listen and seek to understand more and more what Jesus has given to you and what this salvation in Christ all entails now, you learn from his teaching of what your new life in Christ is to look like and what this means for your daily life in the church, your family, and the world around you. All this is as you look forward to that final day when you see him face to face.

Rejoice this day that the Kingdom of God is yours and God’s word is given to you. Find rest and consolation in Jesus, the Sower of the seed, and have all that he says you have. Fear not the devil and his ways. Don’t despair as the cares of this life try to take your eyes of Christ. Don’t worry when the church seems to be weak and small. God’s power is made perfect in weakness and his grace is sufficient for you.

And what is this weakness and grace for you? Christ has lived the perfect life and died for your sin. In the weakness of the cross, God dying, you have forgiveness, life, and salvation. For that you boast more in the weakness of Jesus crucified for you and see you have absolutely everything. You rejoice in God’s word given to you in your life and want to hear it more and more. You delight and holdfast to this word and as Jesus says in John 15, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” God’s word will produce fruit a hundred-fold in your life and your life will show this as a fruit of your God given faith. It will sprout and give forth beautiful, luscious fruit according to God’s word. God’s word does wondrous things.

Dear people of God find confidence each day. You are his people, you are hearers of the word of God, baptized into Christ. Listen and pray to God knowing he hears and answers your prayers all according to his good and gracious will in Christ. Even if the answer is “no” three times like St. Paul you rest easy in God’s grace which has been showered upon you and unto eternal life. That’s what you have been baptized into as God has claimed you as his own. You are his own child, and he is your God. His purposes are accomplished this very instant as you hear him speak through his servant and know exactly what his will is and what is happening. Your sin is forgiven, you have eternal life. That’s the seed that produces a fruit a hundred-fold and keeps itself rooted in the seed scattered by the reckless love of the Sower. What a joy to be that soil. “He who has ears to hear, let him keep on hearing.”

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.