

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

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

Jesus preached this parable for preachers and hearers alike. I was thinking about this the other day when I was reading through this Gospel reading. This parable is so familiar to all of you and really is somewhat of an arch parable for all other parables. You know it well and you do well to listen to the warnings of Jesus.

One of the most frustrating things as a parent is when you warn your kids to stop doing something or they will get hurt and then not even five minutes after you have told them this you hear the thump and cries. The proclamation of the law in a text like this warns you as a Christians. Jesus is admonishing you about the dangers you face in this life from the devil, the world, and your own fallen flesh. The warning is real and it’s serious. Listen to him and learn what he is teaching.

Jesus said in this parable. “And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, 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.”

Considering this text is first to see that God preaches to you. That may sound a bit simple, but it’s easily overlooked. God preaches his word in your life, and this is nothing short of miraculous when you think about it. In the Old Testament reading, the Prophet Isaiah was inspired by God to write, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” God sends out his word and accomplishes his purposes. He sows the seed and he, ultimately is the one who grants the growth and increase. This is God’s work, and it is marvelous.

But why is it then, we take this for granted or we hear his word, and it doesn’t take root. Jesus warns you by way of three things when he explains the parable. “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.”

You can pick your poison, so to speak, when it comes to these things that happen to the seed in the parable. Despising the word of God takes on many different forms but all of them lead to the same end, destruction. All those reasons where the word of God is trampled, devoured, withers, and choked make sense. Jesus tells us, “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.”

There’s no guessing here or leaving you in suspense of what happens. It’s from the very mouth of Jesus himself. The devil attacks God’s people and God’s word. People fall away when hard times come because their faith was shallow and just a fair-weather faith. There are also those who get caught up with the cares and riches and pleasures of life.

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Their faith takes a back seat to the world and never does anything. It's a dead faith. All of those should terrify you when you hear Jesus speak those words because you hear that and look at your lives and the lives of your family and you see these things not just as a parable heard in church but something firsthand in your life.

This is where you see the warning and examine your life according to what Jesus said? 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. 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? So, then, are you excluded from this proclamation? No. Stay awake, watch out. Repent.

Those are warnings to each of us lest we become that seed taken away, fall away from the faith, or simply have a dead faith that doesn't produce rather it just goes through the motions. All of these are eternally deadly. All of these you are warned against lest you fall prey.

In Church, you have been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God. The Spirit has been given to you, and you are preached these things and know what God says. The words of Jesus to you are the words of the Savior and you have "ears to hear." Having ears to hear, then, you listen carefully and take seriously these warnings. You realize too and understand that you need to be a hearer of the word. You know when you look at yourself apart from Christ you see bad soil. You see your life and the dangers you walk in all the way as the devil is wanting to devour you any way he can. You know the temptation to view your Christian faith not lived-in view of and under the cross of suffering, persecution, and a daily dying to sin and rising to new life. You are called to recognize the danger of times of joy in so far as you can become complacent and then when the times of trial come simple retreat away from hearing the word of God and living lives according to you. And yes, you are admonished to a faith that doesn't simply sit and let the word of God go in one ear and out the other but to take it to heart and do what God commands you as you have been given a new life in Christ as Jesus himself said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

Learn from this parable about your life in Christ and seek the things of God as the baptized who heed the warnings of Jesus and listen to his instruction. Listen again to that last group Jesus spoke about, "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." That's what your life in Christ is to look like. Did you catch there too how very different it is from the previous groups Jesus mentions? Jesus says that they "hold it fast in an honest and good heart." An honest and good heart is one that acknowledges and confesses his sin, he's honest about who he is before God. He knows his goodness comes only from the one who alone is good and perfect, Jesus, and has created in him a clean heart and renewed a right spirit within him.

This good soil too bears fruit with patience. Bearing fruit comes from the faith that is fed, nurtured and cultivated by God who has given this faith through his word. It lives and grows as it continues to hear God's word and receive his sacraments because it knows this is where salvation is given and looks to the Sower of the seed, Christ, as Matthew's Gospel account of this tells us, for his very life. All of this is done in patience, a fruit of the Spirit, which suffers, endures, and is steadfast knowing that your labor is not in vain and there is a future glory to come beyond compare. These fruits then show forth a living active faith as he goes home and talks about the word he has heard with his wife, his kids, his friends and neighbors. Know and live what it looks like to see God's word as it gives Christ and eternal life to people who in their sin rightly deserve hell. The good soil doesn't just hear the word and forget it but soaks it up as a parched ground savoring every drop of water to quench it. It confesses this word in his words and actions. He bears fruit because God produces this in his life and the mercy of God spills over into the lives of others. God's cup

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overflows as the Christian forgives and confesses the faith. This is all what Jesus is teaching you today. So “he who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Dear saints of God finally and most importantly take comfort in all of this before you this morning in the one who is the Sower of the seed, Jesus, and look to him alone today. Cling to him because he is the one who didn't fall to the temptations of the devil. He is the one who is the very Word of God made flesh who was never complacent but set his face like flint toward Jerusalem and was faithful during times of trial, and great suffering. He is one who said to his disciples in John 12, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” He is the one who has done it, it is finished, and it's all for you. Hear as you have been given ears to hear and see Jesus crucified for you and risen proclaiming to you that you are forgiven and have eternal life. Baptized into Christ, this is all yours. Hear his word knowing that the secrets of the Kingdom of God are yours. Feast at his Supper and find refreshment for your souls as your sin is forgiven and you have life and salvation. Find rest in Jesus who is Lord of the Sabbath and sows the seed of the word in your life and he accomplishes what he sends it to do; and he has. You are redeemed by the blood of Christ. You have eternal life. Hear this now and forever.

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