

Sexagesima

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] A sermon for February the 7th, 2021, on the day of Sakesagesima Sunday.

The Holy Gospel is written in the 8th chapter of St. Luke, beginning at the 4th verse. And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to him from every city, he spoke by a parable. A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock, and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.

And when he had said these things, he cried, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Then his disciples asked him, saying, What does this parable mean?

[1 : 08] And he said, To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear, then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. And these have no root, who believe for a while, and in time of temptation, fall away.

Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with the cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

[2 : 16] The Gospel of the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Some have described the church in the Western world as faltering because it has sold out to the culture.

Many have said that the church is like a rosebush that is getting ready for a major pruning. I would say that this pruning has already begun.

The days are long gone from the church being a respectable institution where people from all walks of life go for their business connections, social conversations, or to be known by the greater community.

But this inevitable purge by a society that is all but finished with traditional Christianity is not all bad. You see, for too long, the church has functioned like a good old club rather than the true body of Christ.

The church has been thought of as a needed institution to make good citizens who will then conform to the will of the majority. And this is what we see all around our town, with rainbow flags flying and the majority echoing meaningless slogans like, love is love, whatever in the world that's supposed to mean.

[3 : 39] The day of social acceptability is over for those who look to the unwavering truth of Christ and his revelatory word written in the Bible, interpreted by the church throughout the ages, being led by the Holy Spirit.

The church that stands for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints is welcome no more in our culture. And what we are told by the prophets, apostles, saints, and teachers of the true church is that we are not to follow the whims of the culture regarding the libertine ideas that says anything is permissible, as long as you have a personal relationship with Jesus.

No, the true church says, I don't care what your gut tells you, the Lord has revealed his word echoed by thousands upon thousands who proclaimed this truth and gave their lives for it.

Here in our gospel text of Luke chapter 8, we heard how the word of God fell on four different types of soil. A sower went out and scattered seed.

This sower represents the Lord. The seed represents the word of God. And the first place where the seed landed was outside the rows or the boundaries for planting.

[5 : 01] The seed was then trampled and the birds came and devoured it. The birds represent the diabolical or demonic. In other words, the seed was cast outside of its boundaries and the devil took it away and the remaining seed was trampled on by the world.

The second type of soil where the seed fell was on rock. The seed may have flourished for a short time, but because it did not get the proper moisture to create rich earth or dirt, the small crop withered and died.

This represents those who start off on fire for their faith, but it's an adrenaline rush fueled by the emotions lacking in knowledge or deep interest in the things of God.

This represents the new convert that is all excited because the faith is so new, but once the newness wears off, such a person goes back to his or her old ways.

The temptation for such people is to go back to a life of what they perceive to be exciting, where there are no rules. And that becomes their downfall as they become enslaved to an existence void of meaning.

[6 : 24] This leads to the third kind of soil. The third kind of person is one that has rich soil, but it was mostly surrounded by thorns and thistles.

The seed grew quite well, but it was eventually choked out by the pervasive weeds and thorns. This represents many in the church who are baptized, confirmed, and even interested for a time, but they eventually fall away from the faith.

This does not mean that such people always physically leave the church, but it means their lives are devoted to other things and the faith becomes less and less important.

In our day, it often means that such people capitulate to the ways of the culture, affirming deviance and ungodliness, while still pretending to have faith.

These are the positive thinkers who always want to smile and talk about how happy they are, while deep down inside hating the truth and cringing in embarrassment at the radical claims of Jesus and the deep zeal displayed by his followers.

[7 : 37] Now, this is all very depressing, I admit, but we are in pre-Lent. We are in the Jesm of Sundays, so I guess it's to be expected.

But we end on a good note. There is yet another group that is represented by good soil, good ground. These are the people who love Christ.

They love his word. They love being active in the church. They love learning and serving without recognition or earthly reward. Such people strive to say their daily prayers.

These are the people that feel less and less comfortable with the degenerate culture that surrounds them and long for the consummation and return of Jesus. These are the people often spurned by others because of their zeal, but they become a refuge for those who have been used and abandoned by selfish and godless people in our culture.

These are the people who understand that the church is eternal and that all other human agencies, all other organizations take a back seat to the kingdom of God.

[8 : 52] These are the people who want to use their time, talents, and treasures for the kingdom of God, not for their own gut or glory.

These are the people who will withstand the pruning process because they have deep roots in Christ that cannot be shaken or removed from their devotion to their God.

And these are the people who do not fear death because they say with St. Paul the apostle, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

These are the people that make the difficulties in pastoral ministry a true delight. So the question I want to close with is simply this.

Which one of these types of soil describe you? Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

[9 : 56] Amen. Amen.