

Sexagesima

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Preacher: Fr. Randall Russell

[0:00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. As we find ourselves now in the preparatory season of pre-Lent, it is good for us to pause and to consider how the Gospel readings for this Sunday, as well as last Sunday, prepare us for Lent.

For both this and last Sunday's Gospel readings, prepare us for Lent by reminding us why, why Jesus Christ will go to Jerusalem to suffer and die on the cross.

Last Sunday's Gospel, the parable of the workers in the vineyard, already pointed us in this direction. The workers did not receive what they thought they earned, but what the Master freely gave.

And the point wasn't. It was not how the Master paid them. But why? Because the Kingdom of God is not based upon merit, but it is based upon God's grace.

And that is also why our Lord would suffer and die on the cross. Similarly, today, we hear another one of our Lord's parables.

[1:28] The parable of the sower. And once again, the actions of the central figure in this story seem unusual. The sower does not appear to have any strategy for why he does what he does.

He just scatters the seed everywhere, regardless of the result. And some seed is trampled down and devoured.

Some springs up quickly and withers. Some is choked. But some falls on good ground, grows, and yields a crop a hundredfold.

And just like in the parable of the vineyard, the main point here is not how the sower sows his seed, but why.

And the reason why the sower does what he does is because he is good and generous. Because the sower desires that all of the ground might have a chance to be fruitful.

[2:41] In a similar way, God desires the salvation of all men and shares his gospel freely with the entire world.

Even with those who might reject it. And ultimately, that is why our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ went to the cross.

Not because of anything we did, but simply because of who he is.

Therefore, as Lent approaches, as Lent approaches, let us not ask how we will observe this season.

Let us ask ourselves why. Why do we fast? Why do we pray? Why do we give alms, confess our sins, and seek to serve our neighbor?

[3:51] And the answer must be not because we are trying to earn extra favor with God, and not because we have discovered some great spiritual strategy that guarantees the ultimate results.

No, we should do these things for the same reason Christ went to the cross. solely out of love.

Solely because that is who we are in Christ Jesus. For we love him because he first loved us and not the other way around.

Yet I know that every year some of us enter Lent weary, discouraged, or afraid of falling short yet again.

But let us all keep in mind that Lent does not begin with a demand for perfection. It begins every year on Ash Wednesday with a warning.

[5 : 14] Do not be like the hypocrites. Instead, be like Christ. Become like Christ who labored without thought of personal gain or reward.

Who sowed the seeds of peace freely and generously regardless of the results. and who loved both God and neighbor without reservation.

for that, that is who you are by virtue of your baptism. And that, that is who God continually is forming and reforming you to be by his constant grace.

for that is the goal of Lent. And that is the greatest joy and the deepest peace anyone can know.

to stand firm in the midst of life's fasts and to remain perfectly filled and content in God's grace.

[6 : 30] to love both God and neighbor freely. to love both God and neighbor freely. Just like the good sower who indiscriminately scattered his seed.

And just like the master who paid his workers handsomely regardless of what they deserved. for both this and last week's gospel reveal the same truth.

Jesus Christ went to the cross for the same reason we should observe Lent. not because of merit or spiritual technique but solely out of love.

Always out of love. For that is who God is and by God's grace who we are in him.

May he who has ears to hear let him hear. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.