

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, OCTOBER 8/21/, 2007

GAL. 2:16-20

ST. LUKE 8:5-15

by

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Gospel: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

The Lord often speaks in parables to get his followers and listeners to truly seek their meanings. Sayings that aren't obvious can whet the spiritual curiosity and appetite; whereas something clear evinces no inquiry. Christ also spoke in parables when he wished to disguise the spiritual meanings from those who would hear.¹

In this parable, the Fathers tell us that Christ, Himself, *is* the sower. He went out from His Father to sow His seed, He planted good seed in our souls. His words, His preaching, are His seeds. These words are His. He speaks in His own right. When the prophets spoke, they did so, not in their own words, but in those of the Holy Spirit. The Lord, the Holy Spirit and the Father, whilst three, are One. That is why he says "I say unto you" rather than "Thus saith the Lord" as did the prophets. The Saviour does not speak about Himself in the third person. He proclaims Himself in the first person.

Christ, as the sower, teaches but some fall along the way. It is up to us whether we are to be barren or "good soil". If we are good soil, and thus saved and not to perish, we need to do three things (1) keep the word (2) bring forth fruit and (3) and do so with patience. These three distinguish those who are saved from the three types who are *not* saved: (a) those along the way, who because of the hardness of their hearts, hear but do not accept the word (b) those on the rock, who hear the word, but it doesn't take root, they succumb to temptation due to human weaknesses and deny the faith, and (c) those who hear but are wrapped up in the pursuits of earthly pleasures instead of pursuing the treasures not of this world. Three types, then, will perish. Only one will be saved. If we are to be within the only "good soil" type, we must persevere in fulfilling the three things essential for our salvation.²

The Lord's teaching is the seed, and we, our hearts, are the ground. Will the Lord's seed be spiritually productive in our case? Will our hearts be softened and turn to Christ as He sows His seed upon our hearts? From the beginning Christ was the Sower, as our Creator and Master. He sowed the Law of Moses and when He took flesh for our salvation's sake, His word, the seed, went over all the earth. He continues to sow His word and teachings through the Apostles and their successors.³ As the parable describes, more will lose their way than be saved. Three parts perish, one part is saved. Three to one.

Pray to the Holy Spirit, that He gives us the spiritual strength to be the "one". We can do it. God wishes us to be with Him. But, in the final analysis, it is our free choice. Which will it be?

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

¹ Bl. Theophylact's *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Luke, Vol. III* in the series, Bl. Theophylact's *Explanation of the New Testament* (tr. from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p.83.

² *id.*, pp.84-85.

³ Hieromonk German Ciuba (tr. from the Slavonic into English; translated from the Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, in the 11th Indiction), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, pp.458-460.