

The Parable of the Sower: Luke 8:4-15

The Gospel reading for the first two Sundays of Hatoor (yesterday and next Sunday) is the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15 and Matthew 13:1-9). Yesterday's Gospel reading was in Luke 8:4-15 and next week's is in Matthew 13:1-9.

Gospel Reading (Luke 8:4-15) - 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." 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?" 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 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."

- In today's Gospel reading, Jesus compares the truth, which is His word, to a seed. The word of God is the seed: His parables, His healings, His miracles, and Jesus Himself who was cast as a seed into the ground and buried to be raised to new life.
- **The Soils** - The emphasis in this parable is not on the seed or the sower but rather on the soil which is the final determining factor as to whether or not the seed bears fruit. Jesus tells us that there are basically four types of soil from which seeds can grow. Therefore, it is perhaps more appropriate to call this parable the Parable of the Soils. We read that the seed falls on four types of soil, and three out of four reject it. If we have experienced

any kind of crop failure in our life, it is perhaps because God's word is preached but we don't accept it.

Let us briefly examine the four types of soil that Jesus talks about in this parable.

1. **The Seeds by the Wayside** - We have all heard of hardening of the arteries, but a far more deadly disease is the hardening of the heart toward God. Hardening of the arteries stops the flow of blood causing physical death, while a hardening of the heart prevents us from receiving the Bread of Life causing the death of the soul.

- Nothing stops the word of God but a closed heart! It stops it completely, it doesn't penetrate it at all. It is of these hearts that Jesus said, "Neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31).
- But when we hear this, we object, saying "this cannot be true of me. There is no way that my heart is hard." We should think again!
- How are Hearts Hardened? - First, some are hardened by pride. We sometimes think that we have the answer to every question. We think that because we have grown older, that we are wiser and smarter. This is perhaps why Jesus urges us to be like little children.
- Secondly, since we were born into Christianity, we take the truths of our faith for granted. Our church beliefs make no impression on us any more. We just take them for granted never pondering what they really mean or imply.
- Thirdly, the heart can also become hardened to the word of God through lack of cultivation. Just as no water hardens the soil, so no prayer, no church, no sacraments, no relationship with Christ, hardens the soul.
- If only once - just once - the word of God could get through, what a transformation it would bring. If only we could accept the seed, what hope, faith, love, and power it would bring. But we remain hard.

2. **Some Fell on Rock**

- These are precisely the people who admire the word of God: "What a lovely liturgy," "What a great verse," "What a moving Bible passage," or "What a great Bible study,"

and then that's the end of it. They "receive it with joy," but that's as far as it goes because they have "no roots in themselves."

- As strange as it seems, one of the ways of rejecting the word of God is by admiring it. Let us illustrate this point. A church father once told a make-believe story about a flock of geese that milled around in a filthy barnyard imprisoned by a high wooden fence. One day a preaching goose stepped onto an old crate and began to preach. He criticized the geese for being satisfied to live in that filthy barnyard when God had given them wings with which to fly into the sky. He spoke of the goodness of God in giving the geese wings. He urged them to use their wings to fly out of the barnyard to better surroundings. This pleased the geese. They nodded their heads in approval and commented on what a great preacher the goose was. They marveled at what he had said and applauded his eloquence. All this they did. But one thing they never did. They did not use their wings to leave the barnyard. They went right back to their old ways.
- We can apply this story to ourselves. When we attend a liturgy or read a nice verse in the Bible, or attend a nice Bible study, we are deeply moved. But then what? Most of us go back to our old ways. We hear the truth and admire it, but we do not accept it. And so we continue to live with our hatreds, prejudices, our pride, our envy, and our wars.

3. Some Fell Among Thorns

- This is probably the saddest part of this parable. The soil that could of produced greatness produces a jungle. A soil that produces weeds has great potential. It must be good soil, otherwise weeds would not grow there. Good soil has so much potential that weeds can actually burst through asphalt and concrete. But as Jesus says, the thorns grow quick and fast, and they soon choke the seed.
- There are a lot of good people represented here in this type of soil. They receive the word of God and they really want to serve God, but they become involved in so many other interests that God is gradually choked out. It is not that the things that we are busy with that are necessarily bad, they actually may be good things, but they drain our energies and turn our hearts away from Christ. A real-estate salesman once said, "My prayers don't even reach the ceiling before I'm thinking about that real estate deal that's hanging over me."

- So many activities that are good clutter up our lives that they become the enemy of Christ. Jesus poses a question to each one of us: what thorns are we permitting to grow in our own life that choke out our loyalty to God?

4. Some Fell on Good Soil

- The good soil represents those of us who receive the word of God and it becomes a permanent part of us. We keep it in our heart and bring forth fruit with patience. It grows and slowly takes possession of our desires, our emotions, our thoughts and our actions. Little by little, our lives become fruitful and God-like.
- We must admit that there are times when we are any one of the three poor types of soil or are we a strange combination of all of them? The point that Jesus is making here is that our soil can always be improved. Hard soil can be plowed; rocks and thorns can be removed. By care and cultivation, our hearts can become fertile and productive, like the “good soil” that produces a hundredfold.

5. He Who Has Ears to Hear, Let Him Hear

- One of the key ways to improve our soil is to improve our hearing. We need to become sensitive to God’s voice as a sleeping mother is to a cry of her infant.
- Listening is a great virtue, really. We pay the highest respect to someone when we sincerely listen to them.
- In our culture, we have the habit of talking too much and listening too little. We go to social gatherings and everyone is talking at the same time and no one is listening. A church father once said that we always have the wrong switch on: the switch of the mouth is always open and the switch of the ears is always closed.
- A woman once went to a social gathering and wanted to test how well her friends listened to her, so as soon as she got to the gathering, she told her friends, “I just shot my husband today.” And then her friends said, “very nice, good for you dear.” They were not listening to anything she said.
- We have to learn to listen to the word of God, and to each other. We have to listen to the guidance from our parents, our teachers, our spiritual fathers, and the elders.
- At the Transfiguration of Jesus, we read “While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying,

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” Here we see the importance that God places on being a good hearer and listener.

- We must examine ourselves and see what kind of soil we have and how are hearing is related to that soil. May we always be hearers to the word of God and have the good soil that Christ is looking for. We close here with this great verse from the Gospels: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23).