

**THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**August 3, 2014 – Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23**

<sup>1</sup>That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. <sup>3</sup>Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup>He who has ears, let him hear.” <sup>18</sup>“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup>The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup>But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. <sup>22</sup>The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup>But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ used many parables in teaching his disciples and multitudes of other people the spiritual truths of the Kingdom of God. An earthly story is a good way to illustrate heavenly truths. It is still so today. The picture of this parable is relatively familiar and clear. We know the roads, really paths, of Palestine went right through the fields. So, as the farmer sowed his seed by hand, it was easy for some of the seed to fall on the path. Other seed would fall on the rocky ground in the fields, still other seed would fall in among the weeds, while some of the seed would fall on the good ground where it could grow and mature and produce a good return for the farmer.

The important thing here in this parable is not that the seed was sown, but rather what became of the seed once it had been sown. The seed in this parable is the Word of God. What happens when that Word of God is preached? What happens when it reaches the soil of people's hearts? Let's consider that this morning as we study God's Word and

**LET'S USE OUR EARS!**

**MANY DENY WHAT THEY HEAR IN THAT WORD.**

THE BIBLE TEACHING OF ORIGINAL OR INHERITED SIN IS A GOOD EXAMPLE.

Our human reason gets the best of us. We question the clear and plain teachings of the Bible. We question how the sin of Adam and Eve could have any effect on us. Yet the Bible says, **“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”** Some will proudly and boldly defend Darwin's “Origin of the Species” but not even listen to what God says.

God's Word teaches this original sin. The seed here is the Word of God. The soil is our hearts and the hearts of everyone else. By nature our hearts are sinful, evil, and eternally corrupt. A farmer can find some soil better than others. God can find only one kind of soil in the heart of man, one lost by sin.

**GOD WANTS ALL PEOPLE TO BE SAVED.**

The Word of God is still needed today. It is needed as much if not more than ever before. The Christian percentage of the world's population is decreasing, not increasing, according to the statisticians. The Lord comes with the seed of his Word. He plants that seed in the heart of man. He does this through the Means of Grace. He does it through the written Word, the Bible. He

does it through Holy Baptism as we saw two Sundays ago. He does it through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. God makes known to us the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. God sees to it that the Word is preached and taught. He sees that it is planted where it can bring forth fruit.

## **THERE ARE MANY DANGERS AS WE HEAR THE WORD.**

THERE IS THE DANGER OF CARELESS HEARING.

Jesus begins, **“A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.”** It landed on the top of the path and it did not penetrate the ground. The birds could easily pick it up and eat it. Jesus explains what this means. He says, <sup>19</sup>**“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.”** God’s Word lies on top of the heart but it did not get in. The devil could easily pluck it away. The lost sinner is the devil’s victory, gain and joy.

The devil still comes to us if we are not careful. Have you heard statements like these:

- *“Don’t listen to him; he doesn’t know what he is talking about!”*
- *“That Bible – that’s kid’s stuff; I don’t need to be told by anyone else that I am a sinner; I do more for the church than others.”*
- *“I read my Bible at home and besides, the church is full of hypocrites.”*

Yes, there are hypocrites in the visible church. Yes, one can find Christ in the Scriptures at home. But are these not the tools of the devil so that the Word never gets the chance to penetrate deeply into the heart of man? He wants to come and steal it away and we are the losers and he is the winner!

THERE IS THE DANGER OF FALLING TO TEMPTATION (5-6).

Jesus goes on, <sup>5</sup>**“Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.”** This time it was planted in shallow, rocky soil. It came up quickly but did not have a good root system. It withered away when faced by the hot sun. Jesus goes on to give the application: <sup>20</sup>**“The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup>But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.”** The people hear and believe with delightful enthusiasm. However, the Word does not take root deeply in the heart. When faced with the scorching of “temptation” it withers away.

The devil wants us to succumb to these temptations. We suffer trials and temptations in this life. It is often the crisis that will show us if the Word is deeply rooted in the heart. For those firm in the faith they can stand strong. For others it is the way the Word is taken away by Satan himself. We have examples in the many young people instructed by parents, confirmed, who have succumbed to the world’s temptation and have forsaken the Word of God. All of us, regardless of age, need to be on our guard as well. We are all faced with temptations. Yet we cannot let temptation, controversy, or suffering undermine our faith – that is what Satan wants! Don’t let the hardness of heart push the Gospel right out of the door of your heart. That would be fatal for you, too!

THERE IS DANGER IN PROSPERITY (7). Jesus says, <sup>7</sup>**“Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.”** It began to grow. Just like our gardens, the weeds soon took over. If the weeds are not taken care of they will eventually kill the plants. He applies this once again and says, <sup>22</sup>**“The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.”** The Word of God cannot grow in a thicket of worldliness that shuts out

God's light and air. False theology, as well as worldliness, can choke out the pure seed of the Gospel in our hearts.

The devil wants us to be overtaken by worries. There are thorns on all sides of us. Just think how much time we waste worrying about things over which we have no control. With such sinful worrying we are saying to God that he cannot handle those worries! Anything that does not give all glory to God pushes the Lord away from us. Picture a car parked in a closed garage with the motor running. Slowly the garage and car are filled with carbon monoxide and the occupants die. Suffocation takes time but is just as fatal as any other kind of death. Losing the Word slowly and losing one's faith in Christ slowly is just as fatal as if one had rejected it immediately or been an atheist all of one's life. The death is the same – eternal death!

### **THERE ARE MANY BLESSINGS AS WE HEAR THE WORD.**

THERE IS BLESSING AS THE SEED OF THE WORD IS SOWN.

Jesus goes on, <sup>8</sup>**“Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”** It does what it was planted to do, producing well and providing abundant fruit. Really, this is what is expected, isn't it?

THERE IS BLESSING AS THE SEED OF THE WORD IS PREACHED.

Jesus again applies the story: <sup>23</sup>**“But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”** By the grace of God the Word is preached and it results in a God-pleasing Christian life. Many do come to faith, remain faithful and live that Christian life.

THERE IS BLESSING AS WE APPLY THAT WORD.

One heart is not better than another heart. We often resemble all four kinds of soil. We must constantly examine ourselves. We use the Word of God to be instructed that we might see what happens when we hear the Word of God. The Word does the changing of the hearts. This is aimed at our consciences. We have a responsibility as Christian people to use the Word of God as he intends it be used. It is our own fault if we are lost; we cannot blame God. My prayer for you is that you produce a perfect yield. I pray that you put God first with your worship, your Bible study and your offerings. Take care of the beautiful church property God has provided for you. Let your faith show in your relationships with one another. Let that be evident for all of us in all areas of our Christian life! Amen.

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Radcliff, Kentucky  
Volume 54, Number 36